



LA

GAME RELEASE

PRESEASON WEEK 1 vs. LOS ANGELES RAMS

SAT. AUG. 13, 2022 | 7:00 PM PT



LOS ANGELES CHARGERS

GAME RELEASE

714.540.7100 ✦ chargers.com ✦ @chargers



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

BOLTS HOST RAMS IN PRESEASON OPENER

The Los Angeles Chargers take on the Rams for the 39th time in the preseason, kicking off at 7:00 p.m. PT from SoFi Stadium. Noah Eagle, Dan Fouts and LaDainian Tomlinson have the call on KCBS, while Matt "Money" Smith, Daniel Jeremiah and Shannon Farren will broadcast on the Chargers Radio Network airwaves on ALT FM-98.7. Adrian Garcia-Marquez and Francisco Pinto will present the game in Spanish, simulcast on Estrella TV and on Que Buena FM 105.5/94.3.

The Bolts begin their second season under Head Coach **Brandon Staley**, who led the team to a winning record and saw six players earn Pro Bowl nods — including quarterback **Justin Herbert**, who was named the game's Offensive MVP.

Herbert set numerous records in his second pro season last year, including single-season team records for completions (443), passing yards (5,014), touchdowns (38) and 300-yard performances (nine). The Bolts bolstered their roster this offseason with acquisitions that included six-time Pro Bowl outside linebacker **Khalil Mack**, Pro Bowl cornerback **J.C. Jackson** and long snapper **Josh Harris**, along with cornerback **Bryce Callahan**, outside linebacker **Kyle Van Noy** and rookie first-round pick **Zion Johnson**.

The Rams offense features quarterback Matthew Stafford and a pair of productive targets in wide receivers Cooper Kupp and Allen Robinson II. The defense is led by defensive lineman Aaron Donald, cornerback Jalen Ramsey, linebacker Leonard Floyd and newly-acquired linebacker Bobby Wagner.

The Chargers will host Dallas for joint practices leading up to their preseason matchup on Sat., Aug. 20. The game will be the final home contest for the Bolts in the preseason before finishing the exhibition slate at New Orleans on Fri., Aug. 26.

BY THE NUMBERS

- 39** The 2022 Los Angeles roster features 39 new acquisitions, including eight draft selections, one waiver claim and 14 undrafted free agents.
- 5** The Chargers are scheduled to play five prime-time game this year, including a pair of games at SoFi Stadium. The team plays on *Monday Night Football* twice, *Sunday Night Football* twice and in the first-ever *Thursday Night Football* contest broadcast exclusively on Prime Video.
- 25** RB Austin Ekeler is one touchdown catch away from being the youngest running back in the common draft era (since 1967) to haul in 25 receiving scores. Newly-acquired CB J.C. Jackson has 25 interceptions in his career, the most by any NFL player since he entered the league in 2018.

ON THE CALL

TELEVISION: KCBS
Play-by-play: Noah Eagle
Analysts: Dan Fouts
Sideline: LaDainian Tomlinson

SPANISH TV/RADIO: ESTRELLA & QUE BUENA FM-105.5/94.3
Play-by-play: Adrian Garcia-Marquez
Analyst: Francisco Pinto

CHARGERS RADIO: ALT FM-98.7
Play-by-play: Matt "Money" Smith
Analyst: Daniel Jeremiah
Sideline: Shannon Farren

CHARGERS MOBILE APP: Official team news, full game stats, live local Chargers games on the Chargers mobile app. For more details, visit Chargers.com/app.

**Geographic and device restrictions apply. Local & primetime games only. Data charges may apply.*

2022 CHARGERS SCHEDULE

PRESEASON (0-0)

Wk	Date	Opponent	TV	Time*/Res.
1	Sat., Aug. 13	L.A. RAMS	KCBS	7:00 p.m.
2	Sat., Aug. 20	DALLAS	KCBS	7:00 p.m.
3	Fri., Aug. 26	at New Orleans	KCBS	5:00 p.m.

REGULAR SEASON (0-0)

Wk	Date	Opponent	TV	Time*/Res.
1	Sun., Sept. 11	LAS VEGAS	CBS	1:25 p.m.
2	Thurs., Sept. 15	at Kansas City	PRIME	5:15 p.m.
3	Sun., Sept. 25	JACKSONVILLE	CBS	1:05 p.m.
4	Sun., Oct. 2	at Houston	CBS	10:00 a.m.
5	Sun., Oct. 9	at Cleveland	CBS	10:00 a.m.
6	Mon., Oct. 17	DENVER	ESPN	5:15 p.m.
7	Sun., Oct. 23	SEATTLE	FOX	1:25 p.m.
8	—	BYE	—	—
9	Sun., Nov. 6	at Atlanta	FOX	10:00 a.m.
10	Sun., Nov. 13	at San Francisco	NBC	5:20 p.m.
11	Sun., Nov. 20	KANSAS CITY	CBS	1:25 p.m.
12	Sun., Nov. 27	at Arizona	CBS	1:05 p.m.
13	Sun., Dec. 4	at Las Vegas	CBS	1:25 p.m.
14	Sun., Dec. 11	MIAMI	CBS	1:05 p.m.
15	Sun., Dec. 18	TENNESSEE	CBS	1:25 p.m.
16	Mon., Dec. 26	at Indianapolis	ESPN	5:15 p.m.
17	Sun., Jan. 1	L.A. RAMS	NBC	5:20 p.m.
18	Jan. 7/Jan. 8	at Denver	TBD	TBD

**All Times Pacific*

HOME GAMES IN CAPS

2021 AFC WEST STANDINGS

Team	W	L	T	Pct.	PF	PA
Kansas City	12	5	0	.706	480	364
Las Vegas	10	7	0	.588	374	439
L.A. Chargers	9	8	0	.529	474	459
Denver	7	10	0	.412	335	322

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BREAKING DOWN THE 2022 SCHEDULE

SERIES BREAKDOWN	2021 RECORD	NOTES
 <p>ALL-TIME: 56-66-2 HOME: 28-33-1 AWAY: 28-33-1 LAST: L, 35-32 (OT) — 2021 at Raiders</p>	<p>OVERALL: 10-7-0 HOME: 5-4-0 AWAY: 5-3-0 2021 POSTSEASON: AFC W.C.</p>	<p>The Chargers have won 13 of the past 19 home contests and 12 of the past 18 road games against the Raiders. The season opener at SoFi Stadium marks the team's earliest home contest against the Raiders since the two squared off in Week 2 of the 1980 season.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 57-65-1 HOME: 31-29-1 AWAY: 26-36-0 LAST: L, 34-28 (OT) — 2021 vs. Chiefs</p>	<p>OVERALL: 12-5-0 HOME: 7-2-0 AWAY: 5-3-0 2021 POSTSEASON: AFC Champ.</p>	<p>Seven of the past 12 games in the series at Kansas City have been decided by seven or fewer points. The Bolts have a 2-2 record against the Chiefs in <i>Thursday Night Football</i> games. The Chargers have an all-time regular-season home record against Kansas City of 31-29-1.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 9-3-0 HOME: 5-0-0 AWAY: 4-3-0 LAST: W, 39-29 — 2020 vs. Jaguars</p>	<p>OVERALL: 3-14-0 HOME: 3-6-0 AWAY: 0-8-0 2021 POSTSEASON: N/A</p>	<p>The Week 3 matchup marks the 13th regular-season meeting between the teams. The Bolts have won nine of the 12 previous matchups, including all five home games. Los Angeles recorded its first win at SoFi Stadium against the Jaguars in 2020, 39-29.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 5-3-0 HOME: 2-2-0 AWAY: 3-1-0 LAST: L, 41-29 — 2021 at Texans</p>	<p>OVERALL: 4-13-0 HOME: 2-7-0 AWAY: 2-6-0 2021 POSTSEASON: N/A</p>	<p>The Chargers sport a 5-3 record in the all-time series against Houston, with the teams squaring off at NRG Stadium for the second-straight season. Four of the last five contests in the series have been decided by one score or less.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 18-9-1 HOME: 9-4-0 AWAY: 9-5-1 LAST: W, 47-42 — 2021 vs. Browns</p>	<p>OVERALL: 8-9-0 HOME: 6-3-0 AWAY: 2-6-0 2021 POSTSEASON: N/A</p>	<p>Winners of 13 of the last 17 matchups with Cleveland, the Chargers hold an 18-9-1 advantage in the regular-season series against the Browns. Los Angeles won the last matchup in Cleveland in 2018, 38-14. The Bolts are also undefeated in all 13 matchups when scoring 25-plus points against the Browns.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 54-69-1 HOME: 36-26-0 AWAY: 18-43-1 LAST: W, 34-13 — 2021 vs. Broncos</p>	<p>OVERALL: 7-10-0 HOME: 4-5-0 AWAY: 3-5-0 2021 POSTSEASON: N/A</p>	<p>The Bolts hold a 36-26 regular-season home record against Denver. Los Angeles won the 2021 home finale, 34-13, as Justin Herbert set the team's single-season passing touchdowns record. Nine of the last 12 matchups in the Mile High City have been decided by one score, including five of them by less than seven points.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 25-26-0 HOME: 14-10-0 AWAY: 11-16-0 LAST: W, 25-17 — 2018 vs. Seahawks</p>	<p>OVERALL: 7-10-0 HOME: 3-5-0 AWAY: 4-5-0 2021 POSTSEASON: N/A</p>	<p>The Chargers have won three of the last four games against the former division foe, including a 25-17 victory in Seattle in 2018. The Seahawks have a 26-25 advantage in the all-time series. Neither team has won a matchup in the series by double digits since 1998.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 3-8-0 HOME: 1-6-0 AWAY: 2-2-0 LAST: W, 20-17 — 2020 vs. Falcons</p>	<p>OVERALL: 7-10-0 HOME: 2-6-0 AWAY: 5-4-0 2021 POSTSEASON: N/A</p>	<p>The matchup will mark just the 12th meeting in series history, with the Bolts having won each of the past two matchups by three points, including a 2016 overtime win over the eventual NFC Champions. Games between the teams have been close as eight of the 11 games in series history were decided by one score.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 8-6-0 HOME: 5-3-0 AWAY: 3-3-0 LAST: W, 29-27 — 2018 vs. 49ers</p>	<p>OVERALL: 10-7-0 HOME: 4-4-0 AWAY: 6-3-0 2021 POSTSEASON: NFC Champ.</p>	<p>In seven of 14 games against the 49ers, the Chargers have posted 20-plus points, including the last five (all victories). Los Angeles has come away victorious in the last two contests at San Francisco. The Week 10 matchup will mark the first time ever the Bolts and 49ers play on <i>Sunday Night Football</i>.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 10-4-0 HOME: 7-1-0 AWAY: 3-3-0 LAST: W, 45-10 — 2018 vs. Cardinals</p>	<p>OVERALL: 11-6-0 HOME: 3-5-0 AWAY: 8-1-0 2021 POSTSEASON: NFC W.C.</p>	<p>The Chargers hold a 10-4 (.714) all-time advantage against Arizona. Los Angeles has won four of the last five games, including a 45-10 victory in 2018, where Philip Rivers started the game by setting an NFL record with 25 consecutive completions.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 14-17-0 HOME: 10-8-0 AWAY: 4-9-0 LAST: L, 29-21 — 2020 vs. Dolphins</p>	<p>OVERALL: 9-8-0 HOME: 6-3-0 AWAY: 3-5-0 2021 POSTSEASON: N/A</p>	<p>Los Angeles topped the Dolphins last in 2019 as running back Austin Ekeler scored a pair of touchdowns (one rushing, one receiving) and the defense totaled five sacks on the day. Los Angeles has a 10-1 record in the series when scoring at least 25 points.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 27-15-1 HOME: 18-3-1 AWAY: 9-12-0 LAST: L, 23-20 — 2019 at Titans</p>	<p>OVERALL: 12-5-0 HOME: 7-2-0 AWAY: 5-3-0 2021 POSTSEASON: AFC Div.</p>	<p>The Chargers are 27-15-1 (.643) against the former AFL West rival. Los Angeles has won 10 of the past 12 games overall, including seven straight as the home team. In the seven-straight home wins, the Bolts average 32.9 points and 406.4 net yards per game.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 17-10-0 HOME: 6-6-0 AWAY: 11-4-0 LAST: W, 30-24 (OT) — 2019 vs. Colts</p>	<p>OVERALL: 9-8-0 HOME: 4-5-0 AWAY: 5-3-0 2021 POSTSEASON: N/A</p>	<p>For the first time since 2016, Los Angeles heads to Indianapolis, where the Bolts have an 11-4 regular-season record. The Chargers have won five of the last seven matchups. The two teams have also met twice on <i>Monday Night Football</i>, with the Chargers holding a 2-0 advantage.</p>
 <p>ALL-TIME: 5-7-0 HOME: 3-1-0 AWAY: 2-6-0 LAST: L, 35-23 — 2021 at Rams</p>	<p>OVERALL: 12-5-0 HOME: 5-3-0 AWAY: 7-2-0 2021 POSTSEASON: Super Bowl</p>	<p>The Chargers have won three-straight home games against the Rams. The teams have split the last four matchups overall and the Bolts have a 5-7 record in the all-time series. The Sunday night bout will be the first-ever prime-time matchup between the teams.</p>

THE MATCHUP

MEET THE COACHES



BRANDON STALEY

Chargers Head Coach

Overall Record: 9-8 (.529)
 Reg. Season Record: 9-8 (.529)
 Preseason Record: 1-2 (.333)
 Preseason Record vs. LAR: 1-0 (1.000)
 Preseason Home Record (Reg.): 0-1 (.000)

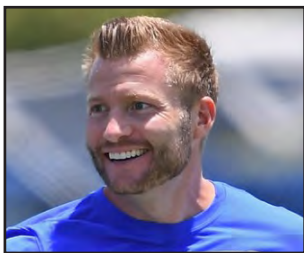
Hometown: Perry, Ohio
 College: Dayton ('04) / Mercyhurst ('05)

Brandon Staley was named the 17th head coach in franchise history on Jan. 17, 2021. In his first season at the helm, Staley helped further develop QB Justin Herbert, who went on to set the NFL record for most passing yards (9,350), passing touchdowns (69) and pass completions (839) by any quarterback in their first two seasons, becoming the first 5,000-yard passer in team history and setting the franchise's single-season passing touchdowns record (38).

Staley served as the defensive coordinator in 2020 for the Los Angeles Rams after spending three seasons as the outside linebackers coach for Denver (2019) and Chicago (2017-18). As one of the most progressive defensive minds in football, Staley overhauled a Rams defense to become the best defense in football in 2020. The unit ranked No. 1 in total defense, passing defense and scoring defense while finishing as the third-best rushing defense.

Prior to coaching in the NFL, Staley spent three seasons (2013, '15-16) at John Carroll as defensive coordinator/secondary coach and the 2014 season as defensive coordinator/linebackers at James Madison. In his final season as a collegiate coach, Staley earned National Coordinator of the Year honors for Division III by leading his unit to rank third in the nation in total defense (218.0 ypg) and fourth in scoring defense (12.6 ppg).

Staley played quarterback at the University of Dayton, serving as a team captain and was a two-year starter. The Flyers posted a 16-5 record with Staley starting under center from 2003-04. Following his time at Dayton, Staley played one season with his twin brother, Jason, at Mercyhurst College, playing there in 2005. A native of Perry, Ohio, Staley and his wife, Amy, have three sons — Colin, Will and Grant.



SEAN McVAY

Rams Head Coach

Overall Record: 62-29 (.681)
 Reg. Season Record: 55-26 (.679)
 Preseason Record: 6-9 (.400)
 Preseason Record vs. LAC: 0-2 (.000)
 Road Record (Pre.): 3-4 (.429)

Hometown: Marietta, Ga.
 College: Miami (Ohio) - '07

On January 12, 2017, Los Angeles Rams Owner/Chairman E. Stanley Kroenke named Sean McVay the 23rd full-time head coach in franchise history. McVay became the youngest coach in modern NFL history at 30 years old.

Last season, McVay helped lead the Rams to the franchise's first World Championship since 1999. Defeating the Bengals in Super Bowl LVI, McVay's leadership propelled the Rams to the club's fifth-straight winning season, the longest streak in team annals. In McVay's second season, the Rams posted a 13-3 record and advanced to the Rams fourth Super Bowl appearance days after his 33rd birthday, becoming the youngest NFL head coach to ever help his team to a Super Bowl.

Before joining the Rams, McVay spent three seasons as Washington's offensive coordinator after initially being promoted to the position during the 2014 season. Initially joining the coaching staff in 2010 as an offensive assistant, McVay tutored the tight ends group from 2011-13. After entering the league with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 2008, McVay spent one season with the Florida Tuskers (2009) of the United Football League. A graduate of Miami University (Ohio), McVay played four seasons at wide receiver for the RedHawks (2004-07), earning the institution's Scholar-Athlete Award in 2007.

2021 TEAM RANKINGS

9-8
 3rd (AFC West)

12-5
 1st (NFC West)

OFFENSE (NFL RANK)

27.9 (5th) Points Per Game 27.1 (T-7th)
 390.2 (4th) Net Yds. Per Game 371.2 (9th)
 107.9 (21st) Net Rushing Yds. Per Game 99.0 (25th)
 282.4 (T-2nd) Net Passing Yds. Per Game 273.1 (5th)
 5.88 (6th) Scrimmage Yds. Per Play 5.98 (4th)
 15/167 Opp. Interceptions/Return Yds. 18/181
 31/-214 (T-6th) Sacks Allowed/Yds. 31/-251 (T-6th)
 10/7 Fumbles/Lost 12/5
 45.2% (6th) Third Down Pct. 43.9% (7th)
 64.0% (4th) Red Zone TD Pct. 60.0% (T-15th)
 29:11 (23rd) Time of Possession Avg. 28:49 (26th)
 22 (T-13th) Giveaways 23 (T-17th)

DEFENSE (NFL RANK)

27.0 (T-29th) Points Per Game 21.9 (15th)
 360.1 (23rd) Net Yds. Per Game 344.9 (17th)
 138.9 (30th) Net Rushing Yds. Per Game 103.2 (6th)
 221.2 (12th) Net Passing Yds. Per Game 241.7 (22nd)
 5.55 (22nd) Scrimmage Yds. Per Play 5.24 (10th)
 11/70 Interceptions/ Return Yds. 19/192
 35/-231 (T-20th) Sacks/Yds. 50/-378 (3rd)
 23/10 Opp. Fumbles/Lost 20/6
 49.5% (32nd) Third Down Pct. 41.3% (21st)
 64.2% (26th) Red Zone TD Pct. 51.8% (8th)
 21 (T-17th) Takeaways 25 (T-10th)

-1 (19th) TURNOVER MARGIN +2 (T-13th)

SPECIAL TEAMS (NFL RANK)

44.2 (25th) Punts-Avg. Yds. (Gross) 44.2 (26th)
 36.5 (32nd) Punts-Avg. Yds. (Net) 42.6 (5th)
 5.9 (32nd) Punt Returns-Avg. Per. 11.3 (5th)
 11.0 (29th) Punt Returns-Avg. Per Allowed. 6.7 (5th)
 25.0 (4th) Kickoff Returns-Avg. Per 20.2 (23rd)
 20.8 (12th) Kickoff Returns-Avg. Per Allowed. 21.5 (18th)
 24/27 (9th) Field Goals Made/Attempted. 32/34 (2nd)

PENALTIES (NFL RANK)

116/1,033 (30th) Penalties Against/Yds. 76/637 (T-3rd)

THE MATCHUP

WITHIN STRIKING DISTANCE THIS YEAR

WR Keenan Allen

- With 95 receptions, would mark his sixth-straight season with 95-plus receptions, tying for the longest streak by any player in NFL history (Antonio Brown, 6 seasons).
- With 100 catches, will have done so in four-straight seasons, becoming the third player in NFL history with a 100-catch streak of at least four seasons.
- With 70 catches in his first 10 games this upcoming season (126 career games), would set the record for fastest player to 800 career receptions in NFL history (Antonio Brown and Julio Jones, 127 games).
- Needs 669 receiving yards to move to sole possession of No. 3 in Chargers history.
- Needs 1,050 receiving yards to move into sole possession of No. 2 in Chargers history.

OLB Joey Bosa

- With 8.0 sacks, would move to No. 3 on the franchise's all-time sacks list.
- With 12.0 sacks, would reach 70 for his career and rank No. 2 in team history.
- With seven strip sacks, would become the only player since at least 2000 to register seven-plus strip sacks in multiple seasons.

RB Austin Ekeler

- Needs a touchdown catch to reach 25 for his career. He would be the youngest running back in the common draft era (since 1967) to reach 25 touchdown receptions.
- Needs two receiving touchdowns to become the only running back with multiple touchdown catches in each of their first six professional seasons in the common draft era (since 1967).
- Needs six touchdown catches to set the record for most receiving touchdowns in the common draft era (since 1967) by a running back with a single team (Brian Westbrook; 29 with Eagles).
- Needs 237 receiving yards to set the record for most receiving yards by an undrafted back in the common draft era (since 1967).
- Needs 88 receptions to set the record for the most catches by an undrafted running back in the common draft era (since 1967).

QB Justin Herbert

- Needs 224 completions to set the NFL record for most completions in a quarterback's first three seasons (Andrew Luck, 1,062).
- With at least 161 completions within the first eight games of the season, would become the fastest player in NFL history to reach 1,000 career completions (record currently held by Matthew Stafford, 41 games).
- Needs 3,608 passing yards to set the NFL record for most passing yards in a passer's first three seasons (Andrew Luck, 12,957).
- Needs three 300-yard passing performances to set the record for most games with 300-plus yards passing in a quarterback's first three seasons in NFL history (Andrew Luck, 19).
- Needs 4,000-plus passing yards to become the only quarterback in history to begin their career with three-straight seasons with at least 4,000 passing yards.
- Needs 30 passing touchdowns to set the NFL record for most passing scores in a quarterback's first three seasons in NFL history (Dan Marino, 98) and become the first player ever to eclipse 30 passing scores in each of his first three seasons.
 - Would join Peyton Manning as the only players in history with 25 touchdown passes in each of their first three pro seasons.
- With 31 touchdown passes in 2022, would become the youngest player in NFL history to reach 100 career passing touchdowns (record currently held by Dan Marino, 24 years, 357 days).
- Needs 24 passing and rushing touchdowns to set the NFL record for most combined passing and rushing scores in a quarterback's first three seasons in NFL history (Dan Marino, 100).
- With 21 passing touchdowns and two rushing touchdowns, would become the only player in NFL history to record 90 passing scores and 10 rushing scores over their first three pro seasons.

OLB Khalil Mack

- Needs 10.0 sacks to become the seventh player since sacks became an official stat in 1982 to record double-digit sacks in a single season with three different teams.
- Needs 12.0 sacks to join Hall of Famer Kevin Greene as the only two players since sacks became an official stat in 1982 to have a 12-sack season with three different teams.

2021 INDIVIDUAL LEADERS



9-8
3rd (AFC West)

12-5
1st (NFC West)

PASSING YARDS

Herbert5,014 Stafford..... 4,886

RUSHING YARDS

Ekeler.....911 Michel*845
Jackson*364 Henderson Jr.688
Herbert302 Woods*46

RECEIVING YARDS

Williams.....1,146 Kupp1,947
Allen.....1,138 Jefferson.....802
Ekeler.....647 Higbee.....519
Cook*.....564 Woods*508

POINTS SCORED

Ekeler.....124 Gay144
Hopkins.....84 Kupp98
Williams.....56 Henderson Jr.48

INTERCEPTIONS

James Jr.2 Ramsey4
Samuel Jr.2 Rapp4
White*2 Three Tied2

SACKS

Bosa.....10.5 Donald.....12.5
Nwosu*5.0 Floyd.....9.5
Tillery.....4.5 Miller*5.0

TACKLES (SOLO)

White*144 (90) Fuller.....113 (63)
James Jr.118 (75) Rapp91 (62)
Adderley97 (67) Reeder*90 (48)
Tranquill70 (42) Donald.....84 (38)

KICKOFF RETURNS (AVG.)

Roberts*19 (32.8) Powell8 (26.0)

PUNT RETURNS (AVG.); FC

Roberts*12 (5.5); 9 Atwell10 (5.4); 1

FIELD GOALS

Hopkins.....18/20 (90.0%) Gay32/34 (94.1%)
Vizcaino*6/7 (85.7%)

PUNTS (GROSS/NET AVG.)

Long.....46 (45.5/36.8) Hekker*51 (44.2/42.6)

*Player no longer with team

CHARGERS-RAMS CONNECTIONS

COLLEGE CONNECTIONS

	LAC S JT Woods	2018-21
	LAR S Jairon McVea	2016-21
	LAC CB J.C. Jackson	2014
	LAR WR Brandon Powell	2014-17
	LAC WR Mike Williams	2014-17
	LAR OT Tremayne Anchrum	2016-19
	LAC Kevin Koger	2008-11, '13-14
	(Tight Ends)	
	LAC QB Brandon Peters	2016-18
	LAR DB David Long Jr.	2016-18
	LAC LB Troy Reeder	2014-15
	LAC DL Austin Johnson	2012-15
	LAR DB Nick Scott	2015-18
	LAR DB Grant Haley	2014-17
	LAC S Skyler Thomas	2021
	LAR CB Duron Lowe	2021
	LAC RB Larry Rountree	2017-20
	LAR TE Kendall Blanton	2016-18
	LAC G Jamaree Salyer	2018-21
	LAR CB Derion Kendrick	2021
	LAC WR Joe Reed	2016-19
	LAR QB Bryce Perkins	2018-19
	LAC QB Easton Stick	2014-18
	LAR OLB Brayden Thomas	2018-21
	LAC S Skyler Thomas	2017-19
	LAR S Dan Isom	2019-21
	LAC John Timu	2011-14, '19-20
	(Defensive Assistant)	
	LAR G Coleman Shelton	2014-17
	LAC Chris Beatty (WRs)	2013-14
	LAR T Rob Havenstein	2012-14
	LAR Thomas Brown	2014
	(Asst. HC/RBs)	
	LAC TE Sage Surratt	2017-20
	LAC DB Ja'Sir Taylor	2017-21
	LAR QB John Wolford	2014-17
	LAC T Zack Bailey	2015-18
	LAR LB Ernest Jones	2018-20
	LAC T Foster Sarell	2017-20
	LAR Kevin Carberry	2018-19
	(Offensive Line)	
	LAC RB Isaiah Spiller	2019-21
	LAR DT Bobby Brown III	2018-20
	LAC LB Kenneth Murray	2017-19
	LAR T Bobby Evans	2016-18
	LAC FB Zander Horvarth	2018-21
	LAR TE Brycen Hopkins	2016-19
	LAC QB Justin Herbert	2016-19
	LAC TE Hunter Kampmoyer	2016-20
	LAC C/G Cameron Hunt	2013-16
	LAR LB Justin Hollins	2014-18
	LAC LB Nick Niemann	2017-20
	LAC Derrick Foster	2018-20
	(RBs/Off. Rec. Coord.)	
	LAR OL AJ Jackson	2017-20
	LAR LB Jack Gervase	2015-18

NOTEWORTHY BONDS

Chargers **Head Coach Brandon Staley** served as the defensive coordinator for the Rams in 2020, producing the NFL's top-ranked total defense. **DL Morgan Fox** (2016-20), **TE Gerald Everett** (2017-20), **DL Sebastian Joseph-Day** (2018-21) and **LB Troy Reeder** (2019-21) all began their careers with the Rams.

Rams **LB Bobby Wagner** and Chargers **Linebackers Coach Michael Wilhoite** spent the 2017 season as teammates on the Seattle Seahawks. **Wilhoite** starting nine outings at LB for Seattle, partnering with **Wagner** as he was named to his fourth Pro Bowl.

In 2018, **Staley** directed the outside linebackers on the Chicago Bears, tutoring Rams **OLB Leonard Floyd** and Chargers **OLB Khalil Mack**. The outside linebackers unit helped Chicago own the league's No. 1-ranked total defense, contributing to an NFC North Division crown.

Rams **Head Coach Sean McVay** and Chargers **Passing Game Coordinator/Quarterbacks Coach Shane Day** coached alongside of each other for two seasons with Washington (2014-15), helping the club earn an NFC East Division title in their second season.

Chargers **Pass Game Specialist Tom Arth** served as the Head Coach at John Carroll University from 2013-16, guiding a staff that featured Rams **Defensive Backs Coach Jonathan Cooley** (2013-14) and Rams **Pass Game Coordinator/Defensive Backs Coach Chris Shula** (2014).

Chargers **S Derwin James Jr.**'s opened his collegiate career in 2015 at Florida State sharing the backfield with consensus All-American **CB Jalen Ramsey**. Bolts **TE Tre' McKitty**, **FB Gabe Nabers** (2016-19) and **CB Asante Samuel Jr.** (2018-20) prepped at Florida State alongside of Rams **RB Cam Akers** (2017-19) and **OLB Keir Thomas** (2016-21).

Alabama's 2017 National Championship squad featured Chargers **P JK Scott**, **Secondary Coach Derrick Ansley** and **Defensive Quality Control Coach Isaac Shewmaker**, as well as Rams **LB Terrell Lewis**.

Chargers **Offensive Coordinator Joe Lombardi** tutored Rams **QB Matthew Stafford** and Detroit's offense on the Lions from 2014-15.

PRO CONNECTIONS

Head Coach Brandon Staley (2017-18)		WR Allen Robinson II (2018-21)
OLB Khalil Mack (2018-21)		LB Leonard Floyd (2016-19)
WR DeAndre Carter (2020)		Special Teams Coordinator
QB Chase Daniel (2018-19)		Joe DeCamillis (2013)
CB Bryce Callahan (2015-18)		
Run Game Coord./DL Jay Rodgers (2015-20)		
Defensive Assistant John Timu (2015-17)		
Offensive Line Coach Brendan Nugent (2013-14)		
Head Coach Brandon Staley (2019)		LB Justin Hollins (2019-20)
CB Bryce Callahan (2019-21)		Special Teams Coordinator
Director of Sports Performance		Joe DeCamillis (2015-2016)
Anthony Lomando (2012-20)		Asst. LBs Coach Thad Bogardus (2015-16)
Def. Coord. Renaldo Hill (2009-10, '19-20)		
Run Game Coord./OLB Coach Jay Rodgers (2009-14)		
Assistant Special Teams Coach Chris Gould (2015-21)		
Offensive Assistant Mike Hiestand (2019-21)		
Asst. Sec. Coach Tom Donatelli (2017-20)		LB Bobby Wagner (2012-21)
LBs Coach Michael Wilhoite (2017)		
TE Gerald Everett (2021)		
QB Chase Daniel (2020)		QB Matthew Stafford (2009-20)
OLB Kyle Van Noy (2014-16)		DT A'Shawn Robinson (2016-20)
T Storm Norton (2017)		WR Brandon Powell (2018-19)
Offensive Coord. Joe Lombardi (2014-15)		
Passing Game Coordinator/ QBs Coach Shane Day (2014-15)		Head Coach Sean McVay (2010-16)
K Dustin Hopkins (2015-21)		Defensive Coord. Raheem Morris (2012-14)
		Offensive Line Coach Kevin Carberry (2016-17)
DL Austin Johnson (2016-19)		LS Matthew Orzech (2020-21)
		TE Jared Pinkney (2021)
		G Coleman Shelton (2018)
Offensive Coordinator Joe Lombardi (2006)		TE Jared Pinkney (2020-2021)
LS Josh Harris (2012-2021)		WR Brandon Powell (2019-2021)
		Defensive Coord. Raheem Morris (2015-20)
		Special Teams Coordinator Joe DeCamillis (1997-2006)
		Defensive Assistant Lance Schulters (2006, 2020)
		Offensive Assistant Nick Jones (2020)

TOM TELESKO

TELESKO'S DRAFT HISTORY

Chargers General Manager Tom Telesko has drafted 69 players since joining the team in 2013. Those draft picks have combined to play 2,110 games and make 1,148 starts in the regular season (43 games played with 26 starts in the postseason) for the Bolts.

2022 CHARGERS DRAFT SELECTIONS

Pos.	Player	Drafted	Reg. Season		Postseason	
			GP	GS	GP	GS
G	Zion Johnson	1-17	0	0	0	0
S	JT Woods	3-79	0	0	0	0
RB	Isaiah Spiller	4-123	0	0	0	0
DL	Otito Ogbonnia	5-160	0	0	0	0
OL	Jamaree Salyer	6-195	0	0	0	0
DB	Ja'Sir Taylor	6-214	0	0	0	0
DB	Deane Leonard	7-236	0	0	0	0
FB	Zander Horvath	7-260	0	0	0	0
Totals			0	0	0	0

2021 CHARGERS DRAFT SELECTIONS

Pos.	Player	Drafted	Reg. Season		Postseason	
			GP	GS	GP	GS
T	Rashawn Slater	1-13	16	16	0	0
CB	Asante Samuel Jr.	2-47	12	12	0	0
WR	Joshua Palmer	3-77	17	5	0	0
TE	Tre' McKitty	3-97	11	4	0	0
OLB	Chris Rumph II	4-118	16	0	0	0
G/T	Brenden Jaimes	5-159	10	0	0	0
LB	Nick Niemann	6-185	17	0	0	0
RB	Larry Rountree III	6-198	12	0	0	0
DB	Mark Webb Jr.	7-241	7	0	0	0
Totals			118	37	0	0

2020 CHARGERS DRAFT SELECTIONS

Pos.	Player	Drafted	Reg. Season		Postseason	
			GP	GS	GP	GS
QB	Justin Herbert	1-6	32	32	0	0
LB	Kenneth Murray Jr.	1-23	27	22	0	0
RB	Joshua Kelley	4-112	24	0	0	0
WR	Joe Reed	5-151	11	0	0	0
S	Alohi Gilman	6-186	26	4	0	0
WR	KJ Hill Jr.	7-220	21	0	0	0
Totals			141	58	0	0

2019 CHARGERS DRAFT SELECTIONS

Pos.	Player	Drafted	Reg. Season		Postseason	
			GP	GS	GP	GS
DL	Jerry Tillery	1-28	47	29	0	0
S	Nasir Adderley	2-60	34	29	0	0
T	Trey Pipkins III	3-91	38	10	0	0
LB	Drue Tranquill	4-130	30	11	0	0
QB	Easton Stick	5-166	1	0	0	0
OLB	Emeke Egbule	6-200	32	0	0	0
DL	Cortez Broughton	7-242	11	0	0	0
Totals			193	79	0	0



2018 CHARGERS DRAFT SELECTIONS

Pos.	Player	Drafted	Reg. Season		Postseason	
			GP	GS	GP	GS
S	Derwin James Jr.	1-17	36	36	2	2
OLB	Uchenna Nwosu	2-48	62	25	2	0
DL	Justin Jones	3-84	51	35	2	2
LB	Kyzir White	4-119	47	37	0	0
C/G	Scott Quessenberry	5-155	63	10	2	0
WR	Dylan Cantrell	6-191	0	0	0	0
RB	Justin Jackson	7-251	43	6	2	0
Totals			302	149	10	4

2017 CHARGERS DRAFT SELECTIONS

Pos.	Player	Drafted	Reg. Season		Postseason	
			GP	GS	GP	GS
WR	Mike Williams	1-7	72	47	2	2
G	Forrest Lamp	2-38	25	18	0	0
C/G	Dan Feeney	3-71	63	57	2	2
S	Rayshawn Jenkins	4-113	61	32	2	2
DB	Desmond King II	5-151	53	23	2	2
T	Sam Tevi	6-190	58	44	2	2
DE	Isaac Rochell	7-225	51	9	2	0
Totals			382	230	12	10

2016 CHARGERS DRAFT SELECTIONS

Pos.	Player	Drafted	Reg. Season		Postseason	
			GP	GS	GP	GS
OLB	Joey Bosa	1-3	79	75	2	2
TE	Hunter Henry	2-35	55	49	1	1
C	Max Tuerk	3-66	0	0	0	0
LB	Joshua Perry	4-102	15	1	0	0
LB	Jatavis Brown	5-175	56	23	0	0
P	Drew Kaser	6-179	36	0	0	0
FB	Derek Watt	6-198	64	13	2	0
G	Donavon Clark	7-224	0	0	0	0
Totals			305	161	5	3

TOM TELESKO



TELESKO'S DRAFT HISTORY

2015 CHARGERS DRAFT SELECTIONS

Pos.	Player	Drafted	Reg. Season		Postseason	
			GP	GS	GP	GS
RB	Melvin Gordon III	1-15	67	63	2	2
LB	Denzel Perryman	2-48	69	51	0	0
CB	Craig Mager	3-83	24	10	0	0
LB	Kyle Emanuel	5-153	63	32	2	0
DE	Darius Philon	6-192	54	19	2	0
Totals			277	175	6	2

2014 CHARGERS DRAFT SELECTIONS

Pos.	Player	Drafted	Reg. Season		Postseason	
			GP	GS	GP	GS
CB	Jason Verrett	1-25	25	21	0	0
LB	Jeremiah Attaochu	2-50	38	13	0	0
G	Chris Watt	3-89	17	8	0	0
DT	Ryan Carrethers	5-165	24	3	0	0
RB	Marion Grice	6-201	0	0	0	0
WR	Tevin Reese	7-240	0	0	0	0
Totals			104	45	0	0

2013 CHARGERS DRAFT SELECTIONS

Pos.	Player	Drafted	Reg. Season		Postseason	
			GP	GS	GP	GS
T	D.J. Fluker	1-11	59	59	2	2
LB	Manti Te'o	2-38	38	34	2	2
WR	Keenan Allen	3-76	116	111	4	3
CB	Steve Williams	5-145	31	4	0	0
LB	Tourek Williams	6-179	44	6	2	0
QB	Brad Sorensen	7-221	0	0	0	0
Totals			288	214	10	7

Current Chargers are bolded in Powder Blue

TELESKO'S PRO BOWLERS

Throughout his tenure with the Chargers, **Tom Telesko** has acquired or extended 14 players that went on to earn Pro Bowl nods, including seven players that were acquired via draft pick.

BOLTS PRO BOWLERS ACQUIRED OR EXTENDED, SINCE 2013

Year Acq.	Player	How Acq.	Pro Bowls
2013	WR Keenan Allen	Drafted (3-76)	5
2014	S Adrian Phillips	UDFA	1
	CB Jason Verrett	Drafted (1-25)	1
2015	RB Melvin Gordon III	Drafted (1-15)	2
	QB Philip Rivers	Extended	3
2016	DE/OLB Joey Bosa	Drafted (1-3)	4
	CB Casey Hayward Jr.	UFA (G.B.)	2
2017	DE Melvin Ingram III	Extension	3
	T Russell Okung	UFA (Den.)	1
2018	S Derwin James Jr.	Drafted (1-17)	2
	C Mike Pouncey	FA	1
2020	QB Justin Herbert	Drafted (1-6)	1
2021	C Corey Linsley	UFA (G.B.)	1
	T Rashawn Slater	Drafted (1-13)	1
Totals	14 Players		28 Pro Bowls
	7 Drafted Players		16 Pro Bowls

ROOKIE RECOGNITION

Since joining the Bolts in 2013, **Tom Telesko** has drafted players that received recognition for their play — notably 2016 NFL Defensive Rookie of the Year **Joey Bosa** and 2020 NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year **Justin Herbert**.

Bosa twice earned NFL Defensive Rookie of the Month in 2016 (October and December) en route to winning consensus Defensive Rookie of the Year honors. Last year, **Asante Samuel Jr.**, also won Defensive Rookie of the Month for September.

In 2020, Herbert was named the NFL Offensive Rookie of the Month for October and November, tossing 10-plus touchdowns in both months. He posted a 122.2 passer rating in October — the best by a rookie in the month in NFL history (min. 50 attempts). He was widely recognized after his record-setting season as Offensive Rookie of the Year.

CHARGERS TO WIN NFL ROOKIE OF THE MONTH, ACQUIRED SINCE 2013

Season	Player	Phase	Month/Week
2016	DE Joey Bosa	NFL Def. Rookie	October
	DE Joey Bosa	NFL Def. Rookie	December
2020	QB Justin Herbert	NFL Off. Rookie	October
	QB Justin Herbert	NFL Off. Rookie	November
2021	CB Asante Samuel Jr.	NFL Def. Rookie	September

TOM TELESKO

LEAGUE HONORS

Over the course of his career as General Manager of the Chargers, **Tom Telesko** has acquired or extended 13 different players that earned AFC Player of the Month or AFC Player of the Week.

Last year, **Justin Herbert** won AFC Offensive Player of the Week three times — including in back-to-back weeks — to become the first Charger to do so since Hall of Fame **RB LaDainian Tomlinson** won the award four times in 2006.

Joey Bosa won AFC Defensive Player of the Week in 2019 following a Week 8 win at Chicago where he totaled 12 tackles (eight solo), two sacks and six tackles for loss.

After a monumental win on *Thursday Night Football* in Kansas City in 2018, **Mike Williams** was named AFC Offensive Player of the Week. He recorded in seven catches for 76 yards (10.9 avg.) and two touchdowns, while adding a 19-yard touchdown run. Williams also hauled in the game-winning two-point conversion in the waning seconds of the game.

CHARGERS TO WIN AFC PLAYER OF THE WEEK OR AFC PLAYER OF THE MONTH, ACQUIRED SINCE 2013

Season	Player	Phase	Week
2016	P Drew Kaser	Special Teams	Week 6 vs. Den.
	LB Denzel Perryman	Defense	Week 7 at Atl.
	RB Melvin Gordon III	Offense	Week 9 vs. Ten.
2017	RB Melvin Ingram III	Defense	September
	RB Melvin Gordon III	Offense	Week 5 at NYG
	WR Travis Benjamin	Special Teams	Week 7 vs. Den.
2018	CB Casey Hayward Jr.	Defense	November
	CB Desmond King II	Defense	Week 9 at Sea.
	CB Desmond King II	Special Teams	Week 13 at Pit.
	K Michael Badgley	Special Teams	Week 14 vs. Cin.
2019	WR Mike Williams	Offense	Week 15 at K.C.
	P Ty Long	Special Teams	Week 1 vs. Ind.
2020	DE Joey Bosa	Defense	Week 8 at Chi.
	CB Casey Hayward Jr.	Defense	Week 1 at Cin.
2021	QB Justin Herbert	Offense	Week 9 at Phi.
	QB Justin Herbert	Offense	Week 13 at Cin.
	QB Justin Herbert	Offense	Week 14 vs. NYG



PFWA SUPERLATIVES

Selections made by **Tom Telesko** have garnered league-wide recognition. He has drafted 12 players that were named All-Rookie by the *Professional Football Writers of America*.

Three picks by Telesko earned *PFWA* Rookie of the Year honors — **Keenan Allen** for offense in 2013, **Joey Bosa** for defense in 2016 and **Justin Herbert** overall and for offense in 2020.

Derwin James Jr. was named All-NFL by the *PFWA* as a rookie. He is one of four Telesko draft selections (Allen, once; Bosa, three times; James, once; Slater, once) to be named All-AFC.

Below is a look at Telesko's draft picks that have been recognized by the *PFWA* as All-NFL, All-AFC or All-Rookie:

CHARGERS DRAFT PICK SUPERLATIVES FROM PFWA WHILE WITH TEAM, SINCE 2013

Drafted	Player	All-NFL	All-AFC	All-Rookie
2013	Keenan Allen	0	1	1
	D.J. Fluker	0	0	1
2016	Joey Bosa	0	3	1
	Jatavis Brown	0	0	1
	Hunter Henry	0	0	1
2017	Dan Feeney	0	0	1
2018	Derwin James Jr.	1	1	1
2019	Drue Tranquill	0	0	1
2020	Justin Herbert	0	0	1
	Kenneth Murray Jr.	0	0	1
2021	Nick Niemann	0	0	1
	Rashawn Slater	0	1	1
Totals	12 Players	1	6	12

BRANDON STALEY

A DEFENSIVE INNOVATOR



One of the most progressive and innovative defensive minds in football, Brandon Staley has been around some of the top-producing defenses since entering the NFL. Twice he has been part of the best scoring defense in football, including 2020 as coordinator.

RANKINGS OF STALEY'S NFL DEFENSES

— Defensive Ranks —

Season	Team	Staley Pos.	Overall	Rush	Pass	Scoring
2017	Chi.	OLBs Coach	10th	11th	7th	9th
2018	Chi.	OLBs Coach	3rd	1st	7th	1st
2019	Den.	OLBs Coach	12th	16th	11th	10th
2020	LAR	Def. Coord.	1st	3rd	1st	1st
2021	LAC	Head Coach	23rd	30th	12th	T-29th
2022	LAC	Head Coach	—	—	—	—

A BEAST IN THE EAST

Brandon Staley led the Bolts to a win in the Eastern Time Zone in his first career game as an NFL head coach. Not only did he coach the team to a victory out East, but it was in the early time slot as well. It was the first season-opening win for the Chargers in the Eastern Time Zone and early time slot since 2002.

ACTIVE HEAD COACH WINS IN EASTERN TIME ZONE, PACIFIC TIME ZONE TEAMS, REGULAR SEASON, SINCE 2021

Rank	Coach (Team)	Wins	Losses	Ties	Pct.
1.	Kyle Shanahan (S.F.)	4	0	0	1.000
	Sean McVay (LAR)	3	0	0	1.000
3.	Brandon Staley (LAC)	3	1	0	.750
4.	Pete Carroll (Sea.)	1	2	0	.333
5.	Nathaniel Hackett (Den.)	0	0	0	—

COACHING AT AN ALL-STAR LEVEL

Since entering the NFL coaching ranks in 2017, **Brandon Staley** has coached 10 different players to be named an all-star. All 10 selections have come in the last four seasons.

BOLTS PRO BOWLERS ACQUIRED OR EXTENDED, SINCE 2013

Season	Team	Staley Pos.	Pro Bowlers
2018	Chicago	Outside Linebackers	1 <i>OLB Khalil Mack</i>
2019	Denver	Outside Linebackers	1 <i>OLB Von Miller</i>
2020	L.A. Rams	Defensive Coordinator	2 <i>DL Aaron Donald, CB Jalen Ramsey</i>
2021	L.A. Chargers	Head Coach	6 <i>WR Keenan Allen, OLB Joey Bosa, QB Justin Herbert, S Derwin James Jr., C Corey Linsley, T Rashawn Slater</i>
Totals	10 Players		10 Pro Bowls

The six Pro Bowlers Staley coached this year are tied for the most in the first full season as a head coach among active head coaches in the AFC. The six all-star selections tied for the second-most in the first full season for a Chargers coach in history.

MOST PRO BOWL SELECTIONS, FIRST FULL SEASON AS HEAD COACH, ACTIVE NFL HEAD COACHES

Rank	Season	Team	Head Coach	Pro Bowlers
1.	2017	LAR	Sean McVay	8
2.	2021	LAC	Brandon Staley	6
	2007	Pit.	Mike Tomlin	6
4.	2019	G.B.	Matt LaFleur	5
	2008	Bal.	John Harbaugh	5
6.	2013	Ari.	Bruce Arians	4

MOST PRO BOWL SELECTIONS, FIRST FULL SEASON AS HEAD COACH, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Season	Head Coach	Pro Bowlers
1.	2007	Norv Turner	9
2.	2021	Brandon Staley	6
	2017	Anthony Lynn	6
3.	1992	Bobby Ross	5
4.	2002	Marty Schottenheimer	3
	1989	Dan Henning	3
	1978	Don Coryell	3
7.	2013	Mike McCoy	2
	1997	Kevin Gilbride	2
	1972	Harland Svare	2
9.	1999	Mike Riley	1
	1986	Al Saunders	1
	1975	Tommy Prothro	1

ASSISTANT COACHES



RYAN FICKEN

SPECIAL TEAMS COORDINATOR
16TH NFL SEASON
1ST SEASON WITH CHARGERS



JOE LOMBARDI

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR
17TH NFL SEASON
2ND SEASON WITH CHARGERS



TOM ARTH

PASS GAME SPECIALIST
4TH NFL SEASON
1ST SEASON WITH CHARGERS



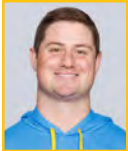
SHANE DAY

PASSING GAME COORDINATOR/QUARTERBACKS
14TH NFL SEASON
2ND SEASON WITH CHARGERS



DERRICK FOSTER

RUNNING BACKS
2ND NFL SEASON
2ND SEASON WITH CHARGERS



MIKE HIESTAND

OFFENSIVE ASSISTANT
4TH NFL SEASON
1ST SEASON WITH CHARGERS



BRENDAN NUGENT

OFFENSIVE LINE
10TH NFL SEASON
1ST SEASON WITH CHARGERS



SHAUN SARRETT

ASSISTANT OFFENSIVE LINE
11TH NFL SEASON
2ND SEASON WITH CHARGERS



GIFF SMITH

OUTSIDE LINEBACKERS
13TH NFL SEASON
7TH SEASON WITH CHARGERS



PAT WHITE

OFFENSIVE ASSISTANT
3RD NFL SEASON
1ST SEASON WITH CHARGERS



MICHAEL WILHOITE

LINEBACKERS
11TH NFL SEASON
2ND SEASON WITH CHARGERS



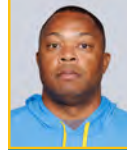
RENALDO HILL

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR
15TH NFL SEASON
2ND SEASON WITH CHARGERS



DERRICK ANSLEY

SECONDARY
3RD NFL SEASON
2ND SEASON WITH CHARGERS



CHRIS BEATTY

WIDE RECEIVERS
2ND NFL SEASON
2ND SEASON WITH CHARGERS



TOM DONATELL

ASSISTANT SECONDARY
6TH NFL SEASON
2ND SEASON WITH CHARGERS



CHRIS GOULD

ASSISTANT SPECIAL TEAMS
8TH NFL SEASON
1ST SEASON WITH CHARGERS



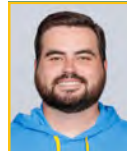
KEVIN KOGER

TIGHT ENDS
4TH NFL SEASON
2ND SEASON WITH CHARGERS



JAY RODGERS

RUN GAME COORDINATOR/DEFENSIVE LINE
14TH NFL SEASON
2ND SEASON WITH CHARGERS



ISAAC SHEWMAKER

DEFENSIVE QUALITY CONTROL
2ND NFL SEASON
2ND SEASON WITH CHARGERS



JOHN TIMU

DEFENSIVE ASSISTANT
5TH NFL SEASON
2ND SEASON WITH CHARGERS



CHANDLER WHITMER

OFFENSIVE QUALITY CONTROL
2ND NFL SEASON
2ND SEASON WITH CHARGERS



ANTHONY LOMANDO

DIRECTOR OF SPORTS PERFORMANCE
14TH NFL SEASON
2ND SEASON WITH CHARGERS

TEAM NOTES

WELCOME TO L.A.



39 players on Los Angeles' active roster are new this season.

HOW NEW CHARGERS WERE ACQUIRED

How Acquired	New Players
Draft Selections	8
Undrafted Free Agents	13
Veteran Free Agents	16
Practice Squad Signings	0
Trades	1
Waiver Claims	1
Totals	39

NEW CHARGERS ON THE ACTIVE ROSTER

Pos.	Player	Exp.	How Acq.
T	Zack Bailey	2	Waivers (Washington)
WR	Trevon Bradford	R	Free Agent
RB	Leddie Brown	R	Free Agent
CB	Bryce Callahan	8	Free Agent
WR	DeAndre Carter	5	UFA (Washington)
C/G	Will Clapp	5	Free Agent
OLB	Jamal Davis II	1	Free Agent
TE	Gerald Everett	6	UFA (Seattle)
DL	Morgan Fox	6	Free Agent
LS	Josh Harris	11	UFA (Atlanta)
FB	Zander Horvath	R	Draft Selection (7-260)
C/G	Cameron Hunt	2	Free Agent
CB	J.C. Jackson	5	UFA (New England)
DL	Austin Johnson	7	UFA (N.Y. Giants)
G	Zion Johnson	R	Draft Selection (1-17)
DL	Sebastian Joseph-Day	5	UFA (L.A. Rams)
OLB	Carlo Kemp	1	Free Agent
TE	Erik Krommenhoek	R	Free Agent
S	Raheem Layne	R	Free Agent
DB	Deane Leonard	R	Draft Selection (7-236)
OLB	Khalil Mack	9	Trade (Chicago)
LB	Tyreek Maddox-Williams	R	Free Agent
RB	Kevin Marks Jr.	R	Free Agent
K	James McCourt	R	Free Agent
DL	Otito Obonnia	R	Draft Selection (5-160)
QB	Brandon Peters	R	Free Agent
LB	Troy Reeder	4	Free Agent
G	Jamaree Salyer	R	Draft Selection (6-195)
P	JK Scott	4	Free Agent
CB	Brandon Sebastian	R	Free Agent
OLB	Ty Shelby	R	Free Agent
TE	Stone Smartt	R	Free Agent
RB	Isaiah Spiller	R	Draft Selection (4-123)
TE	Sage Surratt	1	Free Agent
DB	Ja'Sir Taylor	R	Draft Selection (6-214)
S	Skyler Thomas	R	Free Agent
OLB	Kyle Van Noy	9	Free Agent
C	Isaac Weaver	R	Free Agent
S	JT Woods	R	Draft Selection (3-79)

COACH LOCATIONS

For the 2022 season, 15 members of the Chargers coaching staff will be down on the sideline while eight others will be up in the booth. The location of each coach can be seen below:

CHARGERS COACHES DOWN ON THE SIDELINE (15)

Name	Position
Brandon Staley	Head Coach
Ryan Ficken	Special Teams Coordinator
Derrick Ansley	Secondary
Chris Beatty	Wide Receivers
Cody Cejda	Special Assistant to the Head Coach
Shane Day	Passing Game Coordinator/Quarterbacks
Derrick Foster	Running Backs
Chris Gould	Assistant Special Teams
Kevin Koger	Tight Ends
Brendan Nugent	Offensive Line
Jay Rodgers	Run Game Coordinator/Defensive Line
Giff Smith	Outside Linebackers
John Timu	Defensive Assistant
Pat White	Offensive Assistant
Michael Wilhoite	Linebackers

CHARGERS COACHES UP IN THE BOOTH (8)

Name	Position
Renaldo Hill	Defensive Coordinator
Joe Lombardi	Offensive Coordinator
Tom Arth	Pass Game Specialist
Tom Donatell	Assistant Secondary
Mike Hiestand	Offensive Assistant
Shaun Sarrett	Assistant Offensive Line
Isaac Shewmaker	Defensive Quality Control
Chandler Whitmer	Offensive Quality Control

TELEVISION RATINGS

Los Angeles' 2021 home opener at SoFi Stadium on Sept. 19 garnered 24.3 million viewers. It was the most-watched television show in America that week.

Despite only being viewable to 37 percent of the country, the Week 3 contest at Kansas City had 14.3 million viewers — the third-most-watched television broadcast of the week.

MOST-WATCHED TV TELECASTS, SEPT. 13-SEPT. 19, 2021

Rank	Date	Program	Network	Viewership
1.	Sept. 19	Dal. at LAC	CBS	24.3 M
2.	Sept. 19	K.C. at Bal.	NBC	19.8 M
3.	Sept. 19	Atl. at T.B.	FOX	18.5 M
4.	Sept. 13	Bal. at L.V.	ABC/ESPN/ESPN2	15.3 M

MOST-WATCHED TV TELECASTS, SEPT. 20-SEPT. 26, 2021

Rank	Date	Program	Network	Viewership
1.	Sept. 26	T.B. at LAR	FOX	22.6 M
2.	Sept. 26	G.B. at S.F.	NBC	19.7 M
3.	Sept. 26	LAC at K.C.	CBS	14.3 M
4.	Sept. 20	Det. at G.B.	ABC/ESPN/ESPN2	13.8 M

TEAM NOTES

PUTTING UP POINTS

Los Angeles totaled 474 points in 2021, good for the third-most ever in a single season by a Chargers team. The Bolts scored at least 40 points three times, the most in a single season by a Chargers team since 2008. Los Angeles won all three of those games, improving their all-time record when scoring 40-plus points to 72-1 (.986).

MOST 40-POINT GAMES, SINGLE SEASON, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Season	40-Point Games	Record
1.	1960	5	5-0 (1.000)
2.	2006	4	4-0 (1.000)
	1985	4	4-0 (1.000)
	1981	4	4-0 (1.000)
5.	2021	3	3-0 (1.000)
	2008	3	3-0 (1.000)
	2005	3	3-0 (1.000)
	1982	3	3-0 (1.000)
	1961	3	3-0 (1.000)

FOURTH QUARTER RALLIES

The Chargers offense this season led the NFL with 181 points in the fourth quarter, good for the second-most ever in a single season. Los Angeles' 24 touchdowns in the fourth quarter were the most in a season since at least 1991.

FOURTH QUARTER POINTS SCORED, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Points Scored
1.	Los Angeles Chargers	181
2.	Pittsburgh Steelers	169
3.	New England Patriots	165
4.	New Orleans Saints	162
5.	Buffalo Bills	151

FOURTH QUARTER POINTS, SINGLE SEASON, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Fourth Quarter Points
1.	2013	Broncos	183
2.	2021	Chargers	181
3.	2013	Patriots	178
4.	2006	Chargers	176

The team put up 26 of those points in the fourth quarter of the Week 5 victory over Cleveland, good for the most by an offense since 2013. They were the fourth-most points in a single fourth quarter by a Chargers team in history.

FOURTH QUARTER POINTS, SINGLE GAMES, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Season	Week	Opp.	Result	Points
1.	1991	16	vs. Mia.	W, 38-30	28
	1966	5	vs. Mia.	W, 44-10	28
3.	1960	13	at Oak.	W, 41-17	27
4.	2021	5	vs. Cle.	W, 47-42	26
5.	2008	4	at Oak.	W, 28-18	25

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH



In each season from 2008-21, at least one undrafted rookie has made the Chargers active roster for the Week 1 game. Seven of those players appeared in every regular-season contest for the team, 12 made a start and eight started multiple times as a rookie.

UNDRAFTED ROOKIES ON KICKOFF WEEKEND ROSTER, SINCE 2008

Season	Player	College	GP as Rookie*
2021	LB Amen Ogbongbemiga	Oklahoma State	15 (2 starts)
2020	FB Gabe Nabers**	Florida State	16 (5 starts)
2019	DE Chris Peace	Virginia	1
	S Roderic Teamer	Tulane	7 (6 starts)
2018	LB Emmanuel Ellerbee***	Rice	3
	CB Brandon Facyson	Virginia Tech	15
	WR JJ Jones	West Georgia	3
	RB Detrez Newsome	Western Carolina	9
2017	TE Sean Culkin	Missouri	1
	RB Austin Ekeler	Western State Colorado	16
	LB Nigel Harris	South Florida	5 (1 start)
	K Younghoe Koo	Georgia Southern	4
	LB James Onwualu	Notre Dame	9
2016	RB Kenneth Farrow	Houston	13 (2 starts)
	S Dexter McCoil	Tulsa	16 (2 starts)
	C/G Spencer Pulley	Vanderbilt	16
2015	LB Nick Dzubnar	Cal Poly	16
	WR Tyrell Williams	Western Oregon	7
2014	CB Chris Davis	Auburn	12 (1 start)
	RB Branden Oliver	Buffalo	14 (7 starts)
	DT Tenny Palepoi	Utah	16
2013	S Jahleel Addae	Central Michigan	16 (2 starts)
	DT Kwame Geathers	Georgia	7
2012	G Mike Harris	UCLA	15 (9 starts)
2011	LB Darryl Gamble	Georgia	5
2010	LB Brandon Lang	Troy	10
2009	S C.J. Spillman	Marshall	5 (1 start)
2008	RB Mike Tolbert	Coastal Carolina	13 (7 starts)

*Number of games played as rookie for Chargers

**Part of 55-man active roster for Week 1 (2020 standard elevation)

***Claimed off waivers from Seattle following final cuts

TEAM NOTES

PRIME-TIME DEFENSE

In four prime-time games in 2021, the Chargers defense has allowed an average of 90.8 rushing yards per game. Bolts were one of six teams with at least four prime-time games to allow less than 100 yards per game on the ground in those contests.

RUSHING YARDS PER GAME ALLOWED IN PRIME TIME, MIN. FOUR PRIME-TIME GAMES, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Rushing Yds/Game Allowed
1.	Tampa Bay Buccaneers	57.2
2.	Baltimore Ravens	73.4
3.	Green Bay Packers	82.6
4.	Los Angeles Chargers	90.8
5.	San Francisco 49ers	97.5
6.	Indianapolis Colts	99.8

In the first quarter of *Monday Night Football* in Week 4, the Chargers defense allowed zero net yards. It marked the first time a Bolts defensive did not allow a positive net yard in an opening quarter since 2001.

The Los Angeles defense allowed just one first down in the first half of the Monday night victory, good for the second-fewest allowed by the Chargers in a first half since 2006.

FUMBLE FAVORITES

The Los Angeles defense led the AFC in 2021 with 19 forced fumbles on the season — also ranking No. 3 in the NFL. The 19 forced fumbles tied the team's 2007 season as the most by a Chargers team in the last 20 years.

The Bolts also led the NFL with 11 strip sacks, which are the most by a Chargers defense in 20 seasons.

FORCED FUMBLES, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Forced Fumbles
1.	San Francisco 49ers	22
2.	Arizona Cardinals	21
3.	Los Angeles Chargers	19
4.	Indianapolis Colts	18
	Kansas City Chiefs	18
	Pittsburgh Steelers	18

STRIP SACKS, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Strip Sacks
1.	Los Angeles Chargers	11
2.	Arizona Cardinals	10
3.	Chicago Bears	8
4.	Dallas Cowboys	7
	Los Angeles Rams	7
	Minnesota Vikings	7
	San Francisco 49ers	7

CONVERTING IN CRUNCH TIME

The Chargers offense was among the best at moving the chains on third down in 2021. The team ranked tied for fifth in the NFL with a 45.2 third down percentage. The 100 third-down conversions tied for the sixth-most in the NFL in 2021.

THIRD DOWN OFFENSE, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Att.	Conv.	Conv. Pct.
1.	Kansas City	205	107	52.2
2.	Tampa Bay	223	105	47.1
3.	Buffalo	222	103	46.4
4.	Philadelphia	221	101	45.7
5.	L.A. Chargers	221	100	45.2
	Arizona	221	100	45.2

The Bolts converted an NFL-high 22 attempts on fourth down in 2021. The team finished the season 22-for-34 (64.7 pct.) on fourth down attempts, tying for No. 4 in the NFL.

In the season finale at Las Vegas, the offense converted six-of-seven attempts on fourth down (85.7 pct.). According to the Elias Sports Bureau, the six fourth-down conversions were the most in a single game in the last 40 years.

FOURTH DOWN CONVERSIONS, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Fourth Down Conversions
1.	Los Angeles Chargers	22
2.	Detroit Lions	21
3.	Baltimore Ravens	18
	Indianapolis Colts	18
	Jacksonville Jaguars	18

FOURTH DOWN OFFENSE, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Att.	Conv.	Conv. Pct.
1.	Baltimore	27	18	66.7
	Kansas City	15	10	66.7
3.	Cincinnati	20	13	65.0
4.	L.A. Chargers	34	22	64.7
	New England	17	11	64.7

TWO-POINT PROWESS

Los Angeles led the NFL in two-point conversions in 2021, finishing the season with seven conversions on a league-high 11 attempts. Both of those also set single-season team records. The Chargers have led the NFL in two-point conversions three other times (2008, '10, '18).

TWO-POINT CONVERSIONS, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Two-Point Conversions
1.	Los Angeles Chargers	7
2.	Dallas Cowboys	6
3.	Detroit Lions	5
	Philadelphia Eagles	5

TEAM NOTES

FAST DEFENSIVE STARTS

The Chargers forced two takeaways in the first quarter of the Week 13 win at Cincinnati, the second time the Bolts had multiple takeaways in a first quarter this season (Week 3 win at Kansas City). It's the first time since 2012 that a Chargers defense did so multiple times in the same season. Los Angeles was the only AFC squad in 2021 to have multiple takeaways in the first quarter of two or more games.

For the season, the Chargers forced seven fumbles in the first quarter, tied for the best in the NFL. The seven forced fumbles are the most in the first quarter by a Chargers team in a single season since at least 1991.

FORCED FUMBLES, FIRST QUARTER, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Forced Fumbles
1.	Los Angeles Chargers	7
	Carolina Panthers	7
3.	Buffalo Bills	6
	San Francisco 49ers	6
	Tampa Bay Buccaneers	6
6.	Arizona Cardinals	5

The Bolts had five strip-sacks in the first quarter in 2021, good for the most in the NFL. The five strip-sacks tied for the most in a first quarter by any team in a single season since at least 1991.

STRIP SACKS IN THE FIRST QUARTER, SINGLE SEASON, NFL, SINCE 1991

Rank	Season	Team	Strip Sacks
1.	2021	Los Angeles Chargers	5
	2008	Seattle Seahawks	5
	2005	Kansas City Chiefs	5
	2002	Miami Dolphins	5

STRIP SACKS, FIRST QUARTER, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Strip Sacks
1.	Los Angeles Chargers	5
2.	Carolina Panthers	4
3.	Arizona Cardinals	3
	Chicago Bears	3
	Minnesota Vikings	3

MOVING THE CHAINS

Los Angeles ended 2021 by ranking third in the NFL with a single-season team-record 401 conversions for a first down. The 401 first downs are tied for the sixth-most in a season in history.

FIRST DOWNS, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	First Downs
1.	Kansas City Chiefs	419
2.	Tampa Bay Buccaneers	404
3.	Los Angeles Chargers	401
4.	Buffalo Bills	398
5.	Baltimore Ravens	394

FIRST DOWNS, SINGLE SEASON, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	First Downs
1.	2012	Patriots	444
2.	2013	Broncos	435
3.	2021	Chiefs	419
4.	2011	Saints	416
5.	2021	Buccaneers	404
6.	2021	Chargers	401
	2021	Rams	401
8.	2011	Patriots	399

The Chargers offense moved the chains 33 times in the *Sunday Night Football* victory in Week 11. It tied for the fourth-most first downs by the Bolts in a single game.

MOST FIRST DOWNS, SINGLE GAME, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Game	First Downs
1.	Oct. 19, 1986 at Kansas City	35
2.	Nov. 18, 1984 vs. Miami (OT)	34
	Dec. 20, 1982 vs. Cincinnati	34
4.	Nov. 21, 2021 vs. Pittsburgh	33
	Sept. 9, 2018 vs. Kansas City	33
	Sept. 13, 2013 at Philadelphia	33
	Oct. 31, 2004 vs. Oakland	33

PROTECTING THE FOOTBALL

The Chargers offense fumbled the ball just 10 times in 2021, setting the all-time franchise mark for fewest fumbles in a season.

OFFENSIVE FUMBLES, SINGLE SEASON, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Season	Fumbles
1.	2021	10
2.	1993	13
3.	2013	14
	2009	14

UNIFORM RECORDS

NEW UNIFORM RECORD

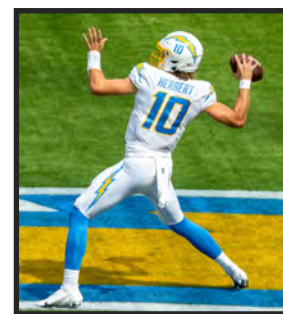
In April 2020, the Bolts unveiled new, sleek uniforms to make the best uniform in sports even better — marking a new era of Chargers football as the team moved into SoFi Stadium. Below is the team's record for the uniform colors as well as combinations.

RECORD BY UNIFORM, PANTS AND COMBOS, SINCE 2020

Uniform Color	Home	Road	Overall
Powder Blue Uniform	7-3	0-2	7-5
White Uniform	0-3	7-6	7-9
Navy Blue Color Rush	0-2	0-1	0-3
Royal Blue Color Rush	2-0	0-0	2-0

Pants Color	Home	Road	Overall
Gold Pants	2-3	4-4	6-7
White Pants	5-3	3-4	8-7
Navy Blue Color Rush	0-2	0-1	0-3
Royal Blue Color Rush	2-0	0-0	2-0

Uniform/Pant Combos	Home	Road	Overall
Powder Uni/Gold Pants	2-2	0-1	2-3
Powder Uni/White Pants	5-1	0-1	5-2
White Uni/Gold Pants	0-1	4-3	4-4
White Uni/White Pants	0-2	3-3	3-5
Navy Blue Color Rush	0-2	0-1	0-3
Royal Blue Color Rush	2-0	0-0	2-0



UNIFORM RECORD SINCE THE MERGER

Since the 1970 NFL-AFL Merger, the Bolts have donned several different uniforms. Below is a look since 1970 of the team's record in specific uniform and pant colors as well as uniform combinations:

RECORD BY UNIFORM, PANTS AND COMBOS, SINCE 1970

Uniform Color	Home	Road	Overall
Powder Blue Uniform	31-36-2	4-6-1	35-42-3
White Uniform	63-38	140-210-2	203-248-2
Navy Blue Uniform	103-89	16-18	119-107
Royal Blue Uniform	19-21	6-4	25-25

Pants Color	Home	Road	Overall
Gold Pants	58-51-2	46-70-3	104-121-5
White Pants	131-114	47-70	178-184
Navy Blue Pants	22-18	73-98	95-116
Royal Blue Pants	5-1	0-0	5-1

Uniform/Pant Combos	Home	Road	Overall
Powder Uni/Gold Pants	8-15-2	1-4-1	9-19-3
Powder Uni/White Pants	23-21	3-2	26-23
White Uni/Gold Pants	36-16	39-62-2	75-78-2
White Uni/White Pants	10-9	29-51	39-60
Royal Uni/Royal Pants	5-1	0-0	5-1
Navy Uni/Navy Pants	5-5	1-1	6-6
Royal Uni/Gold Pants	14-20	6-4	20-24
Navy Uni/White Pants	98-84	15-17	113-101
White Uni/Navy Pants	17-13	72-97	89-110

Helmet Color and Combos	Home	Road	Overall
White Helmet	86-71-2	63-84-3	149-155-5
White Uni/White Pants	6-6	14-10	20-16
White Uni/Gold Pants	6-2	8-20-2	14-22-2
Powder Uni/Gold Pants	8-15-2	1-4-1	9-19-3
Powder Uni/White Pants	23-21	3-2	26-23
Navy Uni/Navy Pants	5-4	1-1	6-5
Royal Uni/Royal Pants	5-1	0-0	5-1
White Uni/Navy Pants	9-6	32-40	41-46
Navy Uni/White Pants	24-16	4-7	28-23
Navy Helmet	130-113	103-154	233-267
Navy Uni/Navy Pants	0-1	0-0	0-1
Navy Uni/White Pants	74-68	11-10	85-78
Royal Uni/Gold Pants	14-20	6-4	20-24
White Uni/Gold Pants	30-14	31-42	61-56
White Uni/Navy Pants	8-7	40-57	48-64
White Uni/White Pants	4-3	15-41	19-44

JUSTIN HERBERT

A 5,000-FOOT VIEW

Justin Herbert became the first 5,000-yard passer in franchise history, throwing for 5,014 yards in 2021. He is now one of just nine players in NFL history to pass for 5,000 yards in a single season, doing so in the season finale. At 23 years, 305 days of age that day, he became the third-youngest player in history to register 5,000 passing yards in a single season.

With 302 rushing yards on the season, Herbert had the most rushing yards by any 5,000-yard passer in NFL history. He was the fourth quarterback to total at least 5,000 passing yards and 100 rushing yards in the same season.

YOUNGEST PLAYERS TO THROW FOR 5,000 PASSING YARDS, SINGLE SEASON, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Age (Years-Days)
1.	1984	Mia.	QB Dan Marino	23-93
2.	2018	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	23-104
3.	2021	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	23-305
4.	2011	Det.	QB Matthew Stafford	23-328

QUARTERBACKS WITH 5,000 PASSING YARDS AND 100 RUSHING YARDS, SINGLE SEASON, NFL HISTORY

Season	Team	Quarterback	Pass Yds	Rush Yds
2021	LAC	Justin Herbert	5,014	302
2019	T.B.	Jameis Winston	5,109	250
2018	K.C.	Patrick Mahomes	5,097	272
2011	N.E.	Tom Brady	5,235	109

LEGGING IT OUT

In the team's *Sunday Night Football* victory over Pittsburgh in Week 11, **Justin Herbert** threw for 382 yards and ran for 90 yards, becoming the only player to ever top 350 yards passing and 90 yards rushing in a single game. He was the fifth player ever to run for 90 yards and pass for 300 in the same game.

QUARTERBACKS WITH 300 PASSING YARDS AND 90 RUSHING YARDS, SINGLE GAME, NFL HISTORY

Season	Team	Quarterback	Pass Yds	Rush Yds
2021	Buf.	Josh Allen	308	109
2021	LAC	Justin Herbert	382	90
2015	Car.	Cam Newton	340	100
2014	Sea.	Russell Wilson	313	106
2011	Phi.	Mike Vick	315	90
1989	Phi.	Randall Cunningham	306	92



AMONG THE GAME'S BEST

In 2021, **Justin Herbert** led the AFC and ranked inside the top four in the NFL in completions, passing yards and passing touchdowns. His nine 300-yard games tied Tampa Bay QB Tom Brady for the most in the NFL.

PASSING COMPLETIONS LEADERS, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Player	Passing Completions
1.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	485
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	443
3.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	436
4.	L.V.	QB Derek Carr	428
5.	Dal.	QB Dak Prescott	410

PASSING YARDS LEADERS, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Player	Passing Yards
1.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	5,316
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	5,014
3.	LAR	QB Matthew Stafford	4,886
4.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	4,839
5.	L.V.	QB Derek Carr	4,804

PASSING TOUCHDOWNS LEADERS, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Player	Passing Touchdowns
1.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	43
2.	LAR	QB Matthew Stafford	41
3.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	38
4.	Dal.	QB Dak Prescott	37
	G.B.	QB Aaron Rodgers	37
	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	37

MOST GAMES WITH 300-PLUS PASSING YARDS, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	9
	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	9
3.	LAR	QB Matthew Stafford	7
4.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	6
	Cin.	QB Joe Burrow	6
	L.V.	QB Derek Carr	6
	Min.	QB Kirk Cousins	6

JUSTIN HERBERT



A COMEBACK KING

In his short career, **Justin Herbert** has orchestrated six come-from-behind victories in the fourth quarter or overtime.

The six comeback wins in the fourth quarter or overtime ranks tied for No. 6 all-time in a quarterback's first two career seasons.

HERBERT'S FOURTH QUARTER/OVERTIME COMEBACK WINS

Date	Opponent	4Q/OT Deficit	Result
Dec. 17, 2020	at Las Vegas	24-27	W, 30-27 (OT)
Sept. 12, 2021	at Washington	13-16	W, 20-16
Sept. 26, 2021	at Kansas City	21-24	W, 30-24
Oct. 10, 2021	vs. Cleveland	35-42	W, 47-42
Nov. 7, 2021	at Philadelphia	16-17	W, 27-24
Nov. 21, 2021	vs. Pittsburgh	34-37	W, 37-34

FOURTH QUARTER/OVERTIME COMEBACK WINS, FIRST TWO PROFESSIONAL SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	4Q/OT Comeback Wins
1.	Ari.	Jake Plummer	7
	Ind.	Andrew Luck	7
	Ind.	Peyton Manning	7
	T.B.	Josh Freeman	7
	Was.	Jay Schroeder	7
6.	LAC	Justin Herbert	6
	—	Six Other Players	6

Herbert's first come-from-behind win of 2021 came in the season opener. It marked the ninth comeback win in a season opener for the Chargers and he became the seventh quarterback to do so.

QB FOURTH QUARTER COMEBACK WINS, SEASON OPENERS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Date	Opp.	Quarterback	4Q Deficit	Result
Sept. 12, 2021	at Was.	Justin Herbert	13-16	W, 20-16
Sept. 13, 2020	at Cin.	Tyrod Taylor	6-13	W, 16-13
Sept. 13, 2015	vs. Det.	Philip Rivers	20-21	W, 33-28
Sept. 11, 2011	vs. Min.	Philip Rivers	14-17	W, 24-17
Sept. 14, 2009	at Oak.	Philip Rivers	17-20	W, 24-20
Sept. 6, 1998	vs. Buf.	Ryan Leaf	13-14	W, 16-14
Sept. 4, 1994	at Den.	Stan Humphries	30-34	W, 37-34
Sept. 19, 1971	vs. K.C.	John Hadl	7-14	W, 21-14
Sept. 10, 1960	vs. Dal*	Jack Kemp	7-20	W, 21-20

*Dallas Texans

CAPTAIN CLUTCH

Justin Herbert has been clutch late in games dating back to his rookie season. In his career, Herbert has engineered eight game-winning drives in the fourth quarter or overtime.

The eight game-winning drives in the fourth quarter or overtime are tied for fourth in NFL history in a player's first two pro seasons. Herbert's five game-winning drives this season are the second-most in the NFL.

JUSTIN HERBERT'S CAREER GAME-WINNING DRIVES

Game	Drive Length	Game-Winning Score
Dec. 13, 2020 vs. Atl.	6 plays, 49 yds (0:31)	Badgley 43-yd FG
Dec. 17, 2020 at L.V.	5 plays, 75 yds (1:49)	Herbert 1-yd TD run*
Dec. 27, 2020 vs. Den.	7 plays, 56 yds (2:01)	Badgley 37-yd FG
Sept. 12, 2021 at Was.	3 plays, 3 yds (0:45)	M.Williams 3-yd TD rec.
Sept. 26, 2021 at K.C.	8 plays, 59 yds (1:10)	M.Williams 4-yd TD rec.
Oct. 10, 2021 vs. Cle.	5 plays, 48 yds (0:31)	Ekeler 3-yd TD run
Nov. 7, 2021 at Phi.	15 plays, 64 yds (6:05)	Hopkins 29-yd FG
Nov. 21, 2021 vs. Pit.	3 plays, 75 yards (1:15)	M.Williams 53-yd TD rec.

*Game-winning drive was in overtime

GAMES-WINNING DRIVES IN FOURTH QUARTER OR OVERTIME, FIRST TWO PROFESSIONAL SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Game-Winning Drives
1.	Ind.	Andrew Luck	10
2.	Ari.	Jake Plummer	9
	Dal.	Dak Prescott	9
4.	LAC	Justin Herbert	8
	BalC*	Bernie Kosar	8
	Buf.	Josh Allen	8
	Ind.	Peyton Manning	8
	Sea.	Russell Wilson	8
	Was.	Jay Schroeder	8

*Baltimore Colts

Herbert posted a game-winning drive in the fourth quarter or overtime of three-straight games in 2020, becoming just the third rookie to do so since the 1970 NFL-AFL merger. The two others — Ben Roethlisberger (2004) and Vince Young (2006) — also won Offensive Rookie of the Year honors from *The Associated Press*.

ROOKIE QUARTERBACKS WITH THREE CONSECUTIVE GAME-WINNING DRIVES, SINCE 1970

Season	Team	Player	Consecutive Games
2020	LAC	Justin Herbert*	3 (Dec. 13 — Dec. 27)
2006	Ten.	Vince Young*	3 (Nov. 26 — Dec. 10)
2004	Pit.	Ben Roethlisberger*	3 (Dec. 5 — Dec. 18)

*Won AP Offensive Rookie of the Year

JUSTIN HERBERT

THREADING THE NEEDLE ON THIRD DOWN

In his 32 career starts, **Justin Herbert** has been the one of the best passers in the NFL at moving the chains on third down. He has completed 203 passes on 325 attempts (62.5 pct.) for 2,521 yards and 27 touchdowns with 11 interceptions (100.0 passer rating). His 2,521 passing yards on third down lead the NFL over the last two seasons.

Herbert tied for the league lead in touchdown passes on third down in 2020. The 14 touchdown passes on third down were the most by a rookie in the last 40 seasons. He added 13 touchdowns this season, giving him 27 third-down passing scores since entering the professional ranks, which is good for the second-most over that span.

THIRD DOWN PASSING YARDS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team/s	Player	Passing Yards
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	2,521
2.	Det./LAR	QB Matthew Stafford	2,496
3.	L.V.	QB Derek Carr	2,483

THIRD DOWN PASSING TOUCHDOWNS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team	Player	Passing Touchdowns
1.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	31
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	27
3.	G.B.	QB Aaron Rodgers	25
4.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	24

Herbert's 100.0 passer rating ranks fifth in the NFL and No. 2 in the AFC over the last two years among players with at least 100 passing attempts on third down.

THIRD DOWN PASSER RATING, MIN. 100 ATT., NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team	Player	Passer Rating
1.	G.B.	QB Aaron Rodgers	112.0
2.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	111.2
3.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	105.7
4.	Min.	QB Kirk Cousins	102.2
5.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	100.0

Herbert leads the NFL with 152 passing first downs on third down over the past two seasons. He threw for 12 third-down conversions in the Week 1 win at Washington, the most passing first downs in a single game on third down since Andrew Luck did so in 2012. Herbert sported a league-leading 79 passing first downs on third down in 2021.

THIRD DOWN PASSING FIRST DOWNS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team	Player	Passing First Downs
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	152
2.	Pit.	QB Ben Roethlisberger	141
3.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	140
4.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	137
5.	Atl.	QB Matt Ryan	136

SETTING THE PACE — COMPLETIONS

After setting the rookie completions record in 2020, **Justin Herbert** has now completed 839 career passes, the most by a player through their first two seasons in NFL history.

MOST COMPLETIONS, FIRST TWO PROFESSIONAL SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Completions
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	839
2.	Ari.	QB Kyler Murray	724
3.	Oak.	QB Derek Carr	698

PASSING COMPLETIONS LEADERS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team	Player	Completions
1.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	886
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	839
3.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	826
4.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	805

In his 31st career game, Herbert became the fastest player in history to eclipse 800 career receptions. He reached the mark at 23 years, 298 days old, making him the third-youngest player to do so. Herbert is closing in on 1,000 career completions and can be among the fastest and youngest to eclipse that milestone.

FEWEST GAMES TO 800 COMPLETIONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	31
2.	Det.	QB Matthew Stafford	34
	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	34
4.	Ari.	QB Kyler Murray	35

YOUNGEST PLAYERS TO 800 COMPLETIONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Age (Years-Days)
1.	N.E.	QB Drew Bledsoe	23-271
2.	T.B.	QB Jameis Winston	23-296
3.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	23-298
4.	Ari.	QB Kyler Murray	24-50
5.	Mia.	QB Dan Marino	24-78

FEWEST GAMES TO 1,000 COMPLETIONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	Det.	QB Matthew Stafford	41
2.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	42
3.	Ari.	QB Kyler Murray	43
	Phi.	QB Carson Wentz	43
—	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	31

YOUNGEST PLAYERS TO 1,000 COMPLETIONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Age (Years-Days)
1.	Ari.	QB Kyler Murray	24-140
2.	N.E.	QB Drew Bledsoe	24-221
3.	Jax.	QB Blake Bortles	24-248
—	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	24-185*

*Age as of Sept. 11, 2022

JUSTIN HERBERT

SETTING THE PACE — PASSING YARDS

Justin Herbert has thrown for 9,350 yards in his career, good for the most in NFL history through a player's first two career seasons. He is the only player ever to reach 9,000 yards in his first two seasons. Herbert has the third-most passing yards since entering the NFL in 2020.

MOST PASSING YARDS, FIRST TWO PROFESSIONAL SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Passing Yards
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	9,350
2.	Ind.	QB Andrew Luck	8,196
3.	T.B.	QB Jameis Winston	8,132
4.	Car.	QB Cam Newton	7,920
5.	Ind.	QB Peyton Manning	7,874

PASSING YARDS LEADERS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team/s	Player	Passing Yards
1.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	9,949
2.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	9,579
3.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	9,350
4.	Det./LAR	QB Matthew Stafford	8,970
5.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	8,951

In his 32nd career game, Herbert eclipsed 9,000 career passing yards, tying as the second-fastest player to do so in history. He reached the mark at 23 years, 305 days old, making him the third-youngest to do so in NFL history.

FEWEST GAMES TO 9,000 PASSING YARDS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	30
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	32
	StL	QB Kurt Warner	32
3.	Det.	QB Matthew Stafford	33
4.	Mia.	QB Dan Marino	34

YOUNGEST PLAYERS TO 9,000 PASSING YARDS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Age (Years-Days)
1.	N.E.	QB Drew Bledsoe	23-264
2.	T.B.	QB Jameis Winston	23-272
3.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	23-305
4.	Mia.	QB Dan Marino	24-35

SETTING THE PACE — TOUCHDOWNS

After setting the all-time rookie record with 31 touchdown passes in 2020, **Justin Herbert** threw 38 passing scores in 2021. He is the only player in history to have 30 or more in each of his first two seasons, while his 69 career touchdown passes are the most in NFL history through the first two seasons of a career.

Herbert has 77 total touchdowns in his career (passing and rushing), the most in history through a player's first two years.

MOST TOUCHDOWN PASSES, FIRST TWO PROFESSIONAL SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Passing Touchdowns
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	69
2.	Mia.	QB Dan Marino	68
3.	Oak.	QB Derek Carr	53

MOST TOTAL TOUCHDOWNS, FIRST TWO PROFESSIONAL SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Total Touchdowns
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	77
2.	Mia.	QB Dan Marino	70
3.	Car.	QB Cam Newton	62

Since joining the professional ranks in 2020, Herbert's 69 passing scores and 77 total touchdowns both rank fifth in the NFL.

PASSING TOUCHDOWNS LEADERS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team	Player	Passing Touchdowns
1.	G.B.	QB Aaron Rodgers	85
2.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	83
3.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	75
4.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	73
5.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	69
6.	Min.	QB Kirk Cousins	68

MOST TOTAL TOUCHDOWNS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team	Player	Total Touchdowns
1.	G.B.	QB Aaron Rodgers	91
2.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	88
3.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	87
4.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	79
5.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	77
6.	Min.	QB Kirk Cousins	70

JUSTIN HERBERT

BIG-TIME PERFORMER

Since entering the NFL, **Justin Herbert** has put up big-time performances. He's among the all-time leaders through a player's first two career seasons.

Herbert has topped 300 passing yards 17 times in his career, good for the most by a player through their first two seasons in NFL history. He has also thrown for at least three touchdowns in 13 career games and multiple touchdowns in 22 games, both tied for the most over a player's first two seasons in history. Herbert's eight 300-yard games and six three-touchdown performances in 2020 both were the most ever by a rookie.

GAMES WITH 300-PLUS PASSING YARDS, FIRST TWO PROFESSIONAL SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	17
2.	Cin.	QB Joe Burrow	11
3.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	10
	Mia.	QB Dan Marino	10

GAMES WITH THREE-PLUS PASSING TOUCHDOWNS, FIRST TWO PROFESSIONAL SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	13
	Mia.	QB Dan Marino	13
3.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	10

GAMES WITH MULTIPLE PASSING TOUCHDOWNS, FIRST TWO PROFESSIONAL SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	22
	Mia.	QB Dan Marino	22
3.	Oak.	QB Derek Carr	17

Herbert has recorded eight games with three touchdown passes and no interceptions, good for the most ever through a player's first two seasons. His seven games with multiple passing scores and a rushing touchdown are also the most through a player's first two seasons in NFL history.

GAMES WITH THREE PASSING TOUCHDOWNS AND ZERO INTERCEPTIONS, FIRST TWO PROFESSIONAL SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	8
2.	Mia.	QB Dan Marino	6
	Bal.	QB Lamar Jackson	6

GAMES WITH MULTIPLE PASSING TDs AND A RUSHING TD, FIRST TWO PROFESSIONAL SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	7
2.	Ari.	QB Kyler Murray	6
	Car.	QB Cam Newton	6

DIAL IT UP DEEP

On his second touchdown pass in Week 5, **Justin Herbert** hit **WR Mike Williams** on a 72-yard score, marking the quarterback's third career passing touchdown of 70-plus yards. He found **WR Jalen Guyton** for a 59-yard score in Week 14, Herbert's seventh passing touchdown of 50 yards or more. The second-year passer paces the league in 70-yard touchdown passes and is tied for No. 2 in 50-yard passing scores since entering the NFL in 2020.

MOST TOUCHDOWN PASSES OF 70-PLUS YARDS, FIRST TWO SEASONS, NFL, SINCE 1991

Seasons	Team	Player	Passing TDs
2020-21	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	3
2020-21	Cin.	QB Joe Burrow	3
2018-19	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	3
2016-17	Dal.	QB Dak Prescott	3
2008-09	Bal.	QB Joe Flacco	3

PASSING TOUCHDOWNS OF 70-PLUS YARDS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team	Player	Passing TDs
1.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	3
	Cin.	QB Joe Burrow	3
	G.B.	QB Aaron Rodgers	3
3.	—	Eight Other Players	2

PASSING TOUCHDOWNS OF 50-PLUS YARDS, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team/s	Player	Passing TDs
1.	Cin.	QB Joe Burrow	8
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	7
	Det./LAR	QB Matthew Stafford	7
4.	Sea.	QB Russell Wilson	6
5.	G.B.	QB Aaron Rodgers	5
	L.V.	QB Derek Carr	5
	Min.	QB Kirk Cousins	5

A HISTORIC NIGHT ON FOURTH DOWN

In the 2021 season finale, **Justin Herbert** turned in a historic performance on fourth down — completing all six pass attempts for 106 yards and the game-tying touchdown, moving the chains each time and registering a perfect 158.3 passer rating.

It was the only known performance with six fourth-down passing first downs. Among players with five or more passing attempts on fourth down in a single game, Herbert is the only one with a perfect passer rating since at least 1991.

FOURTH DOWN PASSER RATING LEADERS, SINGLE GAME, MIN. FOUR ATT., NFL, SINCE 1991

Rk.	Team	Game	Player	Passer Rtg.
1.	LAC	Jan. 9, 2022 at L.V.	QB Justin Herbert	158.3
2.	Atl.	Nov. 22, 2018 at N.O.	QB Matt Ryan	151.3
3.	StL	Nov. 18, 2012 vs. NYJ	QB Sam Bradford	128.8
	NYG	Dec. 26, 1999 vs. Min.	QB Kerry Collins	128.8
5.	Cin.	Oct. 27, 2019 at LAR	QB Andy Dalton	118.8
	Chi.	Dec. 6, 1998 at Min.	QB Steve Stenstrom	118.8

JUSTIN HERBERT IN PRIMETIME

A PRIME-TIME PRODIGY

Since entering the NFL, **Justin Herbert** has made six starts in primetime, leading the Bolts to a 3-3 record in those games. He has led the Chargers to wins on each of the regularly-slated prime-time games — *Thursday Night Football*, *Sunday Night Football* and *Monday Night Football*.

He has been one of the best quarterbacks under the lights since entering the NFL in 2020, with his 102.0 passer rating in prime-time games ranking No. 3 among AFC players over the last two seasons with 100 prime-time passing attempts.

PRIME-TIME PASSER RATING, MIN. 100 ATT., SINCE 2020

Rank	Team	Player	Passer Rating
1.	G.B.	QB Aaron Rodgers	128.5
2.	Dal.	QB Dak Prescott	114.7
3.	N.O.	QB Drew Brees	109.6
4.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	108.7
5.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	102.5
6.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	102.0
7.	Sea.	QB Russell Wilson	101.2
8.	L.V.	QB Derek Carr	100.1

SUNDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL

In 2021, **Justin Herbert** appeared in two games on **Sunday Night Football**, totaling 765 passing yards and six touchdowns with two interceptions on 64-of-105 passing (61.0 pct.) for a 94.3 passer rating. The 94.3 rating is in the top-15 in NFL history in games played on Sunday night (min. 100 attempts).

Herbert made his first career appearance on *Sunday Night Football* in Week 11 against Pittsburgh, throwing for 382 yards and three touchdowns with an interception on 31-of-40 passing (73.2 pct.) for a 116.1 passer rating. He added 90 rushing yards to become the first player ever to have at least 350 yards passing and 90 yards rushing in a single game.

His 116.1 passer rating was the best in a quarterback's first career start on *SNF* with at least 40 passing attempts since the program began in 2006. It was also the best passer rating by a quarterback ever in their first career start in Sunday night game (min. 40 att.).

PASSER RATING LEADERS, FIRST CAREER START IN A SUNDAY NIGHT GAME, MIN. 40 ATT., NFL HISTORY

Rk.	Team	Game	Player	Passer Rtg.
1.	LAC	Nov. 21, 2021 vs. Pit.	QB Justin Herbert	116.1
2.	Ari.	Oct. 4, 2005 vs. S.F.	QB Josh McCown	109.4
3.	StL	Nov. 18, 2001 at N.E.	QB Kurt Warner	105.4

MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL

After setting the *Monday Night Football* rookie record in 2020 for single-game touchdown passes, **Justin Herbert** added three passing scores in the Week 4 win, making him just the fourth player to have seven or more touchdown passes in their first two starts on *MNF* since the program began in 1970. Herbert has thrown for 486 yards and seven scores on 45-of-72 passing (62.5 pct.) for a 114.7 passer rating on Monday night — which ranks as the seventh-best rating in *MNF* history (min. 50 att.).

MOST TOUCHDOWN PASSES, FIRST TWO CAREER STARTS ON MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL, ALL-TIME

Rank	Team	Player	Passing TDs
1.	Buf.	Josh Allen	8
2.	LAC	Justin Herbert	7
	K.C.	Patrick Mahomes	7
	K.C.	Len Dawson	7

PASSER RATING LEADERS, MIN. 50 PASSING ATTEMPTS, MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL HISTORY

Rank	Team/s	Player	Passer Rating
1.	Dal.	QB Dak Prescott	124.3
2.	Ten./L.V.	QB Marcus Mariota	123.7
3.	Bal.	QB Lamar Jackson	123.0
4.	Hou.	QB Deshaun Watson	122.3
5.	Buf.	QB Josh Allen	117.4
6.	S.F.	QB Colin Kaepernick	117.2
7.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	114.7
8.	Was.	QB Sonny Jurgensen	114.2

THURSDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL

As a rookie in 2020, **Justin Herbert** recorded his first career comeback win in the fourth quarter or overtime in Week 15 at Las Vegas, leading the Bolts to a 30-27 overtime victory. He finished the game with 314 passing yards and two touchdowns on 22-of-32 passing (68.8 pct.) for a 121.1 passer rating. Herbert added a rushing touchdown in overtime to secure the victory.

At 22 years, 282 days old, Herbert became the second-youngest player to mount a come-from-behind win in the fourth quarter or overtime of a Thursday night game in NFL history.

YOUNGEST QUARTERBACKS TO LEAD A COME-FROM-BEHIND WIN IN FOURTH QUARTER OR OVERTIME, THURSDAY NIGHT GAMES, NFL HISTORY

Rk.	Team	Game	Player	Age (Yrs-Days)
1.	S.F.	Dec. 14, 2006 at Sea.	QB Alex Smith	22-221
2.	LAC	Dec. 17, 2020 at L.V.	QB Justin Herbert	22-282
3.	Dal.	Dec. 1, 2016 at Min.	QB Dak Prescott	23-125

JUSTIN HERBERT

MR. OCTOBER

In October 2020, **Justin Herbert** set an NFL record by recording a 122.2 passer rating in the month — the best by a rookie quarterback in October (min. 50 att.). His stellar play during the month continued into the 2021 season, making Herbert one of the top quarterbacks in the month of October since entering the NFL.

Herbert's 104.2 career passer rating in October is the fourth-best while his 7.8 passing touchdown percentage ranks No. 3 in NFL history during the month among players with at least 150 October passing attempts.

PASSER RATING, MIN. 150 ATT., OCTOBER, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Passer Rating
1.	Hou.	QB Deshaun Watson	113.6
2.	G.B.	QB Aaron Rodgers	108.4
3.	Ari.	QB Kyler Murray	105.0
4.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	104.2
5.	Sea.	QB Russell Wilson	102.5

PASSING TD PCT., MIN. 150 ATT., OCTOBER, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team/s	Player	Passing TD Pct.
1.	LAR/Cle.	QB Frank Ryan	8.8
2.	Hou.	QB Deshaun Watson	8.5
3.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	7.8
4.	NYY*/Cle.	QB George Ratterman	7.6
5.	Was.	QB Sammy Baugh	7.5

*New York Yanks

In seven starts during the month of October, Herbert has tossed 20 passing scores. His 20 passing touchdowns are the second-most in the last two Octobers by any quarterback. Herbert has thrown a touchdown on 7.8 percent of his October passing attempts over the last two seasons, the best in football (min. 100 att).

PASSING TOUCHDOWNS, OCTOBER, NFL, SINCE 2020

Rank	Team/s	Player	Starts	Passing TDs
1.	T.B.	QB Tom Brady	9	27
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	7	20
3.	Ari.	QB Kyler Murray	9	19
	G.B.	QB Aaron Rodgers	8	19
5.	Ind.	QB Carson Wentz	9	18
	Det./LAR	QB Matthew Stafford	8	18

PASSER RATING, ROOKIE QBs, MIN. 50 ATT., OCTOBER, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Quarterback	Passer Rating
1.	2020	LAC	Justin Herbert	122.2
2.	2004	Pit.	Ben Roethlisberger	116.7
3.	2017	Hou.	Deshaun Watson	116.0

HERBERT SETS SINGLE-SEASON TEAM RECORDS

Justin Herbert put forth a career year, setting multiple franchise single-season records in the process — passing touchdowns (38), passing yards (5,014), completions (443), 300-yard games (nine) and rushing yards by a quarterback (302).

MOST PASSING TOUCHDOWNS, SINGLE SEASON, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Season	Player	Passing TDs
1.	2021	QB Justin Herbert	38
2.	2008	QB Philip Rivers	34
3.	2016	QB Philip Rivers	33
	1981	QB Dan Fouts	33

MOST PASSING YARDS, SINGLE SEASON, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Season	Player	Passing Yards
1.	2021	QB Justin Herbert	5,014
2.	1981	QB Dan Fouts	4,802
3.	2015	QB Philip Rivers	4,792

GAMES WITH 300-PLUS PASSING YARDS, SINGLE SEASON, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Season	Player	Games
1.	2021	QB Justin Herbert	9
2.	2020	QB Justin Herbert	8
	2019	QB Philip Rivers	8
	2015	QB Philip Rivers	8
	1980	QB Dan Fouts	8

MOST RUSHING YARDS, QUARTERBACKS, SINGLE SEASON, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Season	Player	Rushing Yards
1.	2021	Justin Herbert	302
2.	1960	Jack Kemp	238
3.	2020	Justin Herbert	234

HERBERT IN TEAM HISTORY

Through two seasons, **Justin Herbert** has the best completion percentage (66.2) and passer rating (97.9) in Chargers history among players with at least 500 pass attempts.

CAREER COMPLETION PERCENTAGE, MIN. 500 ATTEMPTS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Seasons	Player	Completion Pct.
1.	2020-Present	QB Justin Herbert	66.2
2.	2004-19	QB Philip Rivers	64.7
3.	2001-05	QB Drew Brees	62.2

CAREER PASSER RATING, MIN. 500 ATTEMPTS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Seasons	Player	Passer Rating
1.	2020-Present	QB Justin Herbert	97.9
2.	2004-19	QB Philip Rivers	95.1
3.	2001-05	QB Drew Brees	84.9

JUSTIN HERBERT

HERBERT HITTING 300

Justin Herbert has topped 300 passing yards 17 times in his career, the most in the NFL over the last two seasons. His nine such performances in 2021 tied for the league lead and set a single-season team record. Herbert's eight 300-yard games in 2020 were the most ever by a rookie.

300-YARD PASSING OUTPUTS – 17

Date	Opp.	Cmp-Att	Yards	TD	Rating
Sept. 20, 2020	vs. K.C.	22-33	311	1	94.4
Sept. 27, 2020	vs. Car.	35-49	330	1	88.0
Oct. 25, 2020	vs. Jax.	27-43	347	3	111.3
Nov. 8, 2020	vs. L.V.	28-42	326	2	105.9
Nov. 22, 2020	vs. NYJ	37-49	366	3	116.5
Nov. 29, 2020	at Buf.	31-52	316	1	75.5
Dec. 17, 2020	at L.V.	22-32	314	2	121.1
Jan. 3, 2021	at K.C.	22-31	302	3	134.1
Sept. 12, 2021	at Was.	31-47	337	1	85.2
Sept. 19, 2021	vs. Dal.	31-41	338	1	87.2
Oct. 10, 2021	vs. Cle.	26-43	398	4	122.0
Nov. 7, 2021	at Phi.	32-38	356	2	123.2
Nov. 21, 2021	vs. Pit.	30-41	382	3	116.1
Nov. 28, 2021	at Den.	28-44	303	2	80.0
Dec. 5, 2021	at Cin.	26-35	317	3	118.4
Dec. 26, 2021	at Hou.	27-35	336	1	92.1
Jan. 9, 2022	at L.V.	34-64	383	3	80.4

HERBERT'S STARTING RECORD

Below is a table of **Justin Herbert's** record as an NFL starter:

HERBERT'S REGULAR-SEASON RECORD AS STARTER

Category	Wins	Losses	Ties	Pct.
Overall	15	17	0	.469
Home	9	8	0	.529
Road	6	9	0	.400
vs. AFC West	6	6	0	.500
In December/January	7	4	0	.636
After October	10	10	0	.500
300-Plus Passing Yards	9	8	0	.529
Three-Plus TD Passes	9	4	0	.692
Four-Plus TD Passes	2	1	0	.667
100-Plus Passer Rating	12	3	0	.800
110-Plus Passer Rating	11	2	0	.846
120-Plus Passer Rating	6	2	0	.750
130-Plus Passer Rating	2	1	0	.667

AFC OFFENSIVE PLAYER RECOGNITION

Three times this season, **Justin Herbert** was named AFC Offensive Player of the Week (Weeks 9, 13 and 14). He was the first Charger to win a Player of the Week honor in back-to-back weeks since Hall of Fame **RB LaDainian Tomlinson** did so in Weeks 14 and 15 of his 2006 MVP season. Herbert is also the first quarterback to earn the recognition in consecutive weeks since Baltimore's Lamar Jackson did so in his 2019 MVP campaign (Weeks 9 and 10).

AFC OFFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE WEEK AWARDS – 3

Game	Week	Cmp-Att	Yards	TD	Rating
Nov. 7, 2021 at Phi.	9	32-38	356	2	123.2
Dec. 5, 2021 at Cin.	13	26-35	317	3	118.4
Dec. 12, 2021 vs. NYG	14	23-31	275	3	133.1

MOST AFC OFFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE WEEK AWARDS, SINGLE SEASON, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Season	Player	Weeks	No.
1.	2006	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	9, 11, 14, 15	4
2.	2021	QB Justin Herbert	9, 13, 14	3
	2005	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	3, 6, 12	3
4.	2017	QB Philip Rivers	12, 17	2
	2002	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	4, 13	2
	1985	RB/KR Lionel James	3, 10	2

TARGET ACQUIRED

Justin Herbert has thrown touchdowns to 12 players, including 10 with multiple scores. He's most frequently thrown touchdowns to **WR Keenan Allen** and **WR Mike Williams**, who have each caught 14 scores from Herbert. The first passing score of his career went to **WR Jalen Guyton**, who caught the first touchdown of his career on the play.

HERBERT'S CAREER TOUCHDOWN PASSES BY RECEIVER

Receiver	Touchdown Passes
WR Keenan Allen	14
WR Mike Williams	14
RB Austin Ekeler	10
WR Jalen Guyton	6
TE Donald Parham Jr.	6
TE Jared Cook	4
TE Hunter Henry	4
WR Joshua Palmer	4
WR Tyron Johnson	3
FB Gabe Nabers	2
TE Stephen Anderson	1
TE Virgil Green	1
Total (12 Receivers)	69

JUSTIN HERBERT

A ROOKIE CAMPAIGN FOR THE AGES

AWARDS

- *The Associated Press* Offensive Rookie of the Year
- *Professional Football Writers of America* Rookie of the Year
- PFWA Offensive Rookie of the Year
- PFWA All-Rookie Selection
- NFL Offensive Rookie of the Month (October)
- NFL Offensive Rookie of the Month (November)
- FedEx NFL Air Player of the Week — Week 11 vs. NYJ (fan vote)
- Voted by fans as the Pepsi Zero Sugar Rookie of the Year
- Nine-time Pepsi Zero Sugar Rookie of the Week (voted by fans)

RECORDS AT THE TIME

- Most passing touchdowns by a rookie quarterback ever (31).
- Most total touchdowns by a rookie in NFL history (36).
- Most consecutive games by a rookie quarterback with multiple passing touchdowns in NFL history (seven).
- Most performances by a rookie quarterback with 300-plus passing yards in NFL history (eight).
- Most performances by a rookie quarterback with three-plus touchdowns in NFL history (six).
- Most games by a rookie quarterback with multiple touchdown passes in NFL history (10).
- Most completions ever by a rookie quarterback (396).
- Youngest player ever to throw 30 touchdowns in a single season, doing so at 22 years, 299 days old.
- Tied for the longest streak of game-winning drives (three games) in the fourth quarter or overtime by a rookie quarterback in the Super Bowl era (since 1966).
- Recorded the first win in pro football history by a rookie quarterback while posting 300 passing yards, three touchdown passes, a rushing score and no interceptions.
- Most passing touchdowns by a rookie quarterback in a game (four) and a half (three) in *Monday Night Football* history.
- Tied for the longest streak of games with three-plus touchdown passes by a rookie quarterback in NFL history (four).
- Tied for the most 300-yard passing performances in a player's first two career games (two).
- Became the first player since at least 1970 to register over 1,500 passing yards and a 100-plus passer rating through the first five games of a career.
- Set marks for the most passing attempts, completions, passing yards and touchdown passes by a rookie quarterback in Chargers history.
- Recorded the most single-game rushing yards by a quarterback in team annals (66 in Week 7 vs. Jax.).

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND OTHER NOTES AT THE TIME

- Ranked second among rookie quarterbacks in NFL history with 4,336 passing yards on the season.
- Joined Patrick Mahomes as the only players in history to eclipse 4,000 passing yards in the first 14 starts of a career.
- Became the second player in NFL history to top 250 passing yards in each of the first seven games of a career (Mahomes).
- Threw a touchdown pass in each of his first 10 games played, the second-longest streak to open a career in NFL history.
- Threw for 277 yards in the first half of Week 11, the most by any rookie quarterback in a first half over the last 40 seasons.
- Became the third quarterback in NFL history to have 300 passing yards and a rushing score in a debut.
- Threw for the fourth-most passing yards in a debut since 1970.
- Became the first quarterback to throw a touchdown and run for a score in the first half of a debut since 1954.

OFFENSIVE ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

Justin Herbert earned widespread recognition as the Offensive Rookie of the Year, including as the 10th quarterback in history to win the honor from *The Associated Press*. Herbert was also selected by *Professional Football Writers of America* as Rookie of the Year and Offensive Rookie of the Year — becoming the second and seventh quarterback to win those awards, respectively. He is the first player in history to be recognized with all three honors.

QBs TO WIN AP OFFENSIVE ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

Season	Team	Player	Total TDs
2020	LAC	Justin Herbert	36
2019	Ari.	Kyler Murray	24
2016	Dal.	Dak Prescott	29
2012	Was.	Robert Griffin III	27
2011	Car.	Cam Newton	35
2010	StL	Sam Bradford	19
2008	Atl.	Matt Ryan	17
2006	Ten.	Vince Young	19
2004	Pit.	Ben Roethlisberger	18
1970	Buf.	Dennis Shaw	10

HOT OUT OF THE GATE

Justin Herbert kicked off his career with a pair of historic streaks. As a rookie, he tossed a touchdown pass in each of the first 10 games of his career, just one less than the all-time record. Herbert's streak of games with 250-plus passing yards to start a career ended at seven contests, ranking second in NFL history.

PLAYERS WITH A PASSING TOUCHDOWN, CONSECUTIVE GAMES TO START CAREER, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Consecutive Games
1.	Was.	QB Mark Rypien	11
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	10
3.	Den.	QB Jay Cutler	9

PLAYERS WITH 250 PASSING YARDS, CONSECUTIVE GAMES TO START CAREER, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Consecutive Games
1.	K.C.	QB Patrick Mahomes	10
2.	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	7
3.	—	Seven Other Players	2

Herbert threw 31 touchdowns in 2020, eclipsing 30 in the season finale. At 22 years, 299 days of age that day, he became the youngest player in history to register 30 touchdown passes in a single season, besting a mark set by Ravens QB Lamar Jackson.

YOUNGEST PLAYERS TO THROW 30 TOUCHDOWN PASSES, SINGLE SEASON, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Age (Years-Days)
1.	2020	LAC	QB Justin Herbert	22-299
2.	2019	Bal.	QB Lamar Jackson	22-339

JUSTIN HERBERT

A BIG-TIME ROOKIE

In 2020, **Justin Herbert** posted the most passing touchdowns (31) and total touchdowns (36) by a rookie quarterback in NFL history.

He also registered a rookie-record six games with three-plus touchdowns. Four of those games were in a row, joining Deshaun Watson as the only rookie quarterbacks in NFL history with three or more consecutive games of three-plus touchdown passes.

Herbert had a seven-game streak with multiple touchdown passes, good for the longest by a rookie quarterback in NFL history and tied for the third-best in team history. He finished the year with a rookie-record 10 multi-touchdown games.

PASSING TOUCHDOWNS, ROOKIE QBs, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Passing TDs
1.	2020	LAC	Justin Herbert	31
2.	2018	Cle.	Baker Mayfield	27
3.	2012	Sea.	Russell Wilson	26
	1998	Ind.	Peyton Manning	26

TOTAL TOUCHDOWNS, ROOKIE QBs, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Total TDs
1.	2020	LAC	Justin Herbert	36
2.	2011	Car.	Cam Newton	35
3.	2012	Sea.	Russell Wilson	30

GAMES WITH MULTIPLE PASSING TOUCHDOWNS, ROOKIE QUARTERBACKS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Games
1.	2020	LAC	Justin Herbert	10
2.	2018	Cle.	Baker Mayfield	9

With 4,336 passing yards, Herbert recorded the second-most passing yards in NFL history among rookie quarterbacks. Herbert completed 396 passes and tossed for 300-plus yards in eight games, the most by a rookie quarterback in history.

PASSING YARDS, ROOKIE QBs, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Passing Yards
1.	2012	Ind.	Andrew Luck	4,374
2.	2020	LAC	Justin Herbert	4,336
3.	2011	Car.	Cam Newton	4,051
4.	2015	T.B.	Jameis Winston	4,042

GAMES WITH 300-PLUS PASSING YARDS, ROOKIE QUARTERBACKS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Games
1.	2020	LAC	Justin Herbert	8
2.	2012	Ind.	Andrew Luck	6

COMPLETIONS, ROOKIE QBs, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Completions
1.	2020	LAC	Justin Herbert	396
2.	2016	Phi.	Carson Wentz	379
3.	2021	Jax.	Trevor Lawrence	359

EFFICIENCY AT ITS FINEST

With a 98.3 passer rating in 2020, **Justin Herbert** had the No. 5 rating by a rookie quarterback in NFL history (min. 200 att.). Herbert's 289.1 passing yards per game ranked No. 1 in NFL history among rookie QBs with at least 200 passing attempts.

PASSER RATING, ROOKIE QBs, MIN. 200 ATT., NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Passer Rating
1.	2016	Dal.	Dak Prescott*	104.9
2.	2017	Hou.	Deshaun Watson	103.0
3.	2012	Was.	Robert Griffin III*	102.4
4.	2012	Sea.	Russell Wilson	100.0
5.	2020	LAC	Justin Herbert*	98.3
6.	2004	Pit.	Ben Roethlisberger*	98.1
7.	1983	Mia.	Dan Marino	96.0

PASSING YARDS/GAME, ROOKIE QBs, MIN. 200 ATT., NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Passing Yds/Game
1.	2020	LAC	Justin Herbert*	289.1
2.	2012	Ind.	Andrew Luck	273.4
3.	2020	Cin.	Joe Burrow	268.8
4.	2018	Cle.	Baker Mayfield	266.1
5.	2011	Car.	Cam Newton*	253.2

*Won AP Offensive Rookie of the Year



KEENAN ALLEN

A FIVE-YEAR SPAN FOR THE AGES

Keenan Allen has topped 95 receptions in each season since 2017, becoming the second player in NFL history to do so in five-straight years. Over the last five seasons, Allen leads the NFL in receptions and ranks fifth in receiving yards. He is one of 10 players in history to top 500 receptions over any five-year span.

CONSECUTIVE SEASONS WITH 95-PLUS RECEPTIONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team/s	Player	No. of Seasons
1.	Pit.	WR Antonio Brown	6 (2013-18)
2.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	5 (2017-Present)
3.	Hou./Ari.	WR DeAndre Hopkins	4 (2017-20)
	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison*	4 (1999-2002)
	S.F.	WR Jerry Rice*	4 (1993-96)

*Pro Football Hall of Famer

RECEPTIONS LEADERS, NFL, SINCE 2017

Rank	Team	Player	Receptions
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	509
2.	G.B.	WR Davante Adams	506
3.	K.C.	TE Travis Kelce	480

RECEIVING YARDS LEADERS, NFL, SINCE 2017

Rank	Team/s	Player	Receiving Yards
1.	G.B.	WR Davante Adams	6,195
2.	K.C.	TE Travis Kelce	6,144
3.	Hou./Ari.	WR DeAndre Hopkins	6,094
4.	K.C.	WR Tyreek Hill	6,037
5.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	5,918

PLAYERS WITH 500 CATCHES IN A FIVE-YEAR SPAN, NFL HISTORY

Seasons	Team/s	Player	Receptions
2017-21	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	509
	G.B.	WR Davante Adams	506
2016-20	N.O.	WR Michael Thomas	510
	Hou./Ari.	WR DeAndre Hopkins	508
2015-19	Atl.	WR Julio Jones	519
	Hou.	WR DeAndre Hopkins	504
2014-18	Pit.	WR Antonio Brown	576
	Atl.	WR Julio Jones	524
2013-17	Pit.	WR Antonio Brown	582
2012-16	Pit.	WR Antonio Brown	547
2011-15	Pit.	WR Antonio Brown	510
2009-13	N.E./Den.	WR Wes Welker	522
2008-12	N.E.	WR Wes Welker	560
2007-11	N.E.	WR Wes Welker	554
2002-06	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison	500
2001-05	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison	514
2000-04	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison	534
1999-2003	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison	563
1998-2002	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison	528
1994-98	Min.	WR Cris Carter	507
1993-97	Min.	WR Cris Carter	515
1992-96	S.F.	WR Jerry Rice	524



A PERENNIAL PRO BOWLER

With prolific campaigns each of the last five seasons, Keenan Allen earned five-straight Pro Bowl nods as one of the top receivers in football. Allen is one of six offensive players to be named a Pro Bowler following each of the last five seasons. His five-straight Pro Bowls is tied for the fourth-longest active streak among offensive players.

LONGEST ACTIVE STREAK OF PRO BOWL SELECTIONS, OFFENSIVE PLAYERS, NFL

Rank	Team	Player	Consecutive Pro Bowls
1.	K.C.	WR Travis Kelce	7 (2016-22)
2.	K.C.	WR Tyreek Hill	6 (2017-22)
	S.F.	FB Kyle Juszczyk	6 (2017-22)
4.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	5 (2018-22)
	G.B.	WR Davante Adams	5 (2018-22)
	N.O.	RB Alvin Kamara	5 (2018-22)

Allen is now tied for the sixth-most all-star selections in team history. Hall of Fame **LB Junior Seau**, **QB Philip Rivers** and Hall of Fame **QB Dan Fouts** are the only Chargers draft picks with more Pro Bowl selections with the team in history.

MOST PRO BOWL SELECTIONS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Player	Pro Bowls	No.
1.	LB Junior Seau	1990-2002	12
2.	QB Philip Rivers	2007, '10-12, '14, '17-19	8
	TE Antonio Gates	2005-12	8
4.	DE Leslie O'Neal	1990-91, '93-96	6
	QB Dan Fouts	1980-84, '86	6
6.	WR Keenan Allen	2018-22	5
	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	2003, '05-08	5
	TE Kellen Winslow	1981-84, '88	5
	T Russ Washington	1975-76, '78-80	5

KEENAN ALLEN

A HISTORIC TRACK RECORD

Keenan Allen caught nine passes in his 99th career game in 2020's Week 14 win against Atlanta, setting an all-time record for the most catches through the first 100 games of a career. Allen added a catch in the 100th game of his career to add to his record-setting mark.

RECEPTIONS, FIRST 100 CAREER GAMES, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team/s	Player	Rec.
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	624
2.	Pit.	WR Antonio Brown	622
3.	Atl.	WR Julio Jones	619
4.	Ari./Bal.	WR Anquan Boldin	614
5.	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison	591

Allen eclipsed 700 career receptions in Week 12, doing so in his 111th game to tie Antonio Brown for the fastest player to reach that mark in NFL history.

With a team-record 16 receptions in 2020's Week 11 win against the New York Jets, Allen tied as the fastest player in NFL history to reach 600 career receptions with Antonio Brown (96 games).

FEWEST GAMES TO 700 RECEPTIONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	111
	Pit.	WR Antonio Brown	111
3.	Atl.	WR Julio Jones	112
4.	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison	114

FEWEST GAMES TO 600 RECEPTIONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team/s	Player	Games
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	96
	Pit.	WR Antonio Brown	96
3.	Atl.	WR Julio Jones	97
4.	Ari./Bal.	WR Anquan Boldin	98

KEENAN SETS THE MARK

WR Keenan Allen finished the game with six catches for 52 yards (8.7 avg.), giving him a team-record 106 receptions on the year.

MOST RECEPTIONS, SINGLE SEASON, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Season	Player	Receptions
1.	2021	WR Keenan Allen	106
2.	2019	WR Keenan Allen	104
3.	2017	WR Keenan Allen	102
4.	2020	WR Keenan Allen	100
	2003	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	100

HIT THE CENTURY MARK

Keenan Allen reached 100 receptions for the fourth season in his career in 2021, tying for the sixth-most 100-catch campaigns in history. The California product reached the mark each of the last three seasons, tying for the third-longest streak in NFL history.

MOST 100-CATCH SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team/s	Player	No. of Seasons
1.	Pit.	WR Antonio Brown	6
	Den./Chi./NYJ	WR Brandon Marshall	6
3.	Ari.	WR Larry Fitzgerald	5
	Hou.	WR Andre Johnson	5
	N.E.	WR Wes Welker	5
6.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	4
	Hou./Ari.	WR DeAndre Hopkins	4
	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison	4
	Ind.	WR Reggie Wayne	4
	S.F.	WR Jerry Rice	4

CONSECUTIVE 100-CATCH SEASONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team/s	Player	No. of Seasons
1.	Pit.	WR Antonio Brown	6 (2013-18)
2.	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison	4 (1999-2002)
3.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	3 (2019-21)
	Hou./Ari.	WR DeAndre Hopkins	3 (2018-20)
	N.O.	WR Michael Thomas	3 (2017-19)
	Ari.	WR Larry Fitzgerald	3 (2015-17)
	Den.	WR Brandon Marshall	3 (2007-09)
	N.E.	WR Wes Welker	3 (2007-09)
	Det.	WR Herman Moore	3 (1995-97)
	S.F.	WR Jerry Rice	3 (1994-96)

TOP OF THE CHARTS

Keenan Allen has now ranked inside the top four of the AFC for receptions in three-straight seasons. He also ranked seventh in receiving yards.

RECEPTIONS LEADERS, AFC, 2021

Rank	Team	Player	Receptions
1.	K.C.	WR Tyreek Hill	111
2.	Bal.	TE Mark Andrews	107
	Pit.	WR Diontae Johnson	107
4.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	106
5.	Mia.	WR Jaylen Waddle	104

RECEIVING YARDS LEADERS, AFC, 2021

Rank	Team	Player	Receiving Yards
1.	Cin.	WR Ja'Marr Chase	1,455
2.	Bal.	TE Mark Andrews	1,361
3.	K.C.	WR Tyreek Hill	1,239
4.	Buf.	WR Stefon Diggs	1,225
5.	Pit.	WR Diontae Johnson	1,161
6.	LAC	WR Mike Williams	1,146
7.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	1,138

KEENAN ALLEN

THIRD-DOWN PHENOM

Over his historic five-year span, **Keenan Allen** has also been the NFL's top receiver on third down, totaling 149 catches for 1,992 yards and moving the chains on 123 of those receptions — all of which are NFL highs. He ranked tied for fifth over that span with 14 touchdown grabs on third down.

Allen continued his third-down dominance in 2021. He had 31 catches for 414 yards and two touchdowns on third down, with 25 of those receptions moving the chains.

THIRD DOWN RECEPTIONS, NFL, SINCE 2017

Rank	Team/s	Player	Receptions
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	149
2.	LAR	WR Cooper Kupp	127
3.	G.B.	WR Davante Adams	122
4.	Hou./Ari.	WR DeAndre Hopkins	115

THIRD DOWN RECEIVING YARDS, NFL, SINCE 2017

Rank	Team	Player	Receiving Yards
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	1,992
2.	LAR	WR Cooper Kupp	1,954
3.	G.B.	WR Davante Adams	1,780
4.	K.C.	WR Tyreek Hill	1,681

RECEIVING FIRST DOWNS, THIRD DOWN, NFL, SINCE 2017

Rank	Team/s	Player	Rec. First Downs
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	123
2.	LAR	WR Cooper Kupp	102
3.	G.B.	WR Davante Adams	96
4.	Hou./Ari.	WR DeAndre Hopkins	94
	K.C.	WR Tyreek Hill	92
	K.C.	TE Travis Kelce	92

ALLEN A DAY'S WORK

With nine receptions for 112 yards (12.4 avg.) in Week 11, **Keenan Allen** tied a team record with his third-consecutive game of eight or more catches.

MOST CONSECUTIVE GAMES WITH EIGHT OR MORE RECEPTIONS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rk.	Player	Dates	Consec. Games
1.	WR Keenan Allen	Nov. 7, 2021-Nov. 21, 2021	3
	WR Keenan Allen	Oct. 25, 2020-Nov. 8, 2020	3
	WR Keenan Allen	Sept. 8, 2019-Sept. 22, 2019	3
	WR Keenan Allen	Nov. 18, 2017-Dec. 3, 2017	3
	TE Antonio Gates	Oct. 23, 2005-Nov. 6, 2005	3



THE TOP TARGET

In 2020, **Keenan Allen** not only made team history with a record-setting 16 catches in the Bolts' Week 11 win, he also set an NFL record by registering his sixth career game of 13-plus receptions. Allen also became the fifth player in NFL history with multiple performances of 15 or more catches.

Allen caught 12 passes for 104 yards in the Week 9 win at Philadelphia, marking his record-setting ninth career performance with at least 12 receptions and 100 receiving yards.

MOST GAMES WITH 13-PLUS RECEPTIONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	6
2.	N.E.	WR Wes Welker	5
	Pit.	WR Antonio Brown	5

MOST GAMES WITH 15-PLUS RECEPTIONS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	2
	Dal.	TE Jason Witten	2
	Den.	WR Brandon Marshall	2
	N.E.	WR Wes Welker	2
	Pit.	WR Antonio Brown	2

MOST GAMES WITH 12-PLUS CATCHES AND 100-PLUS RECEIVING YARDS, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Games
1.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	9
2.	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison	8
	N.E.	WR Wes Welker	8

KEENAN ALLEN

TRIPLE-THREAT

From Weeks 11-13 in 2017, **Keenan Allen** became the first player in NFL history to post three-consecutive games with 10-plus receptions, 100-plus receiving yards and a touchdown catch.

KEENAN ALLEN RECEIVING STATS, WEEK 11-13, 2017

Week	Date	Opp.	Rec.	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD
11	Nov. 19, 2017	vs. Buf.	12	159	13.3	29	2
12	Nov. 23, 2017	at Dal.	11	172	15.6	42t	1
13	Dec. 3, 2017	vs. Cle.	10	105	10.5	26	1

Allen capped off the season with an interception in the road finale at the New York Jets. The pick made him the first player in NFL history to have 90-plus catches and an interception in the same season. Allen also joined Hall of Famers Don Hutson (1942) and Randy Moss (2009) as the third player in league annals to register 1,000-plus receiving yards and an interception in the same season.

PLAYERS WITH 1,000 RECEIVING YARDS AND AN INT, SINGLE SEASON, NFL HISTORY

Season	Team	Player	Rec.	Rec. Yds	INTs
2017	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	102	1,393	1
2009	N.E.	WR Randy Moss*	83	1,264	1
1942	G.B.	E Don Hutson*	74	1,211	7

**Pro Football Hall of Famer*

KEENAN KEEPS CLIMBING

Keenan Allen's first catch in Week 10 of the 2020 season made him the franchise leader in receptions among wide receivers, passing Hall of Famer **Charlie Joiner** in the process. Allen now ranks No. 2 in team annals behind **TE Antonio Gates** with 730 career receptions.

In Week 2 of 2021, Allen moved to fourth on the team's receiving yards list. He currently sits at No. 2 among Chargers in history for games with 100-plus receiving yards and has a franchise-record 14 games with 10-plus receptions.

CAREER RECEPTIONS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Seasons	Player	Receptions
1.	2003-18	TE Antonio Gates	955
2.	2013-Present	WR Keenan Allen	730
3.	1976-86	WR Charlie Joiner*	586
4.	1979-87	TE Kellen Winslow*	541
5.	2001-09	RB LaDainian Tomlinson*	530
6.	1962-70	FL Lance Alworth*	493

**Pro Football Hall of Famer*

CAREER RECEIVING YARDS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Seasons	Player	Receiving Yards
1.	2003-18	TE Antonio Gates	11,841
2.	1962-70	FL Lance Alworth	9,584
3.	1976-86	WR Charlie Joiner	9,203
4.	2013-Present	WR Keenan Allen	8,535

KEEPING IT 100

Keenan Allen registered his fourth 100-yard performance of the year in Week 11. It gave him 31 games with 100-plus yards for his career, tied for the fourth-most since he entered the NFL in 2013.

Allen's seven 100-yard games in 2017 were the most by a Charger in a single season since 1980. He became the first Chargers rookie to top 100 receiving yards in a postseason contest.

REGULAR-SEASON 100-YARD RECEIVING GAMES — 31

Date	Opp.	Rec.	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD
Oct. 6, 2013	at Oak.	6	115	19.2	30	1
Oct. 14, 2013	vs. Ind.	9	107	11.9	22t	1
Nov. 3, 2013	at Was.	8	128	16.0	22	1
Nov. 24, 2013	at K.C.	9	124	13.8	29	0
Dec. 1, 2013	vs. Cin.	8	106	13.3	22	0
Sept. 28, 2014	vs. Jax.	10	135	13.5	24	0
Nov. 23, 2014	vs. StL	6	104	17.3	35	1
Nov. 30, 2014	at Bal.	11	121	11.0	23t	2
Sept. 13, 2015	vs. Det.	15	166	11.1	21	0
Sept. 27, 2015	at Min.	12	133	11.1	34t	2
Oct. 18, 2015	at G.B.	14	157	11.2	38	0
Sept. 17, 2017	vs. Mia.	9	100	11.1	24	0
Oct. 1, 2017	vs. Phi.	5	138	27.6	50	0
Nov. 19, 2017	vs. Buf.	12	159	13.3	29	2
Nov. 23, 2017	at Dal.	11	172	15.6	42t	1
Dec. 3, 2017	vs. Cle.	10	105	10.5	26	1
Dec. 10, 2017	vs. Was.	6	111	18.5	51	0
Dec. 31, 2017	vs. Oak.	9	133	14.8	28	1
Sept. 9, 2018	vs. K.C.	8	108	13.5	23	1
Nov. 4, 2018	at Sea.	6	124	20.7	54	0
Dec. 2, 2018	at Pit.	14	148	10.6	21	1
Sept. 8, 2019	vs. Ind.	8	123	15.4	28t	1
Sept. 22, 2019	vs. Hou.	13	183	14.1	34	2
Sept. 27, 2020	vs. Car.	13	132	10.2	22	1
Oct. 25, 2020	vs. Jax.	10	125	12.5	27	0
Nov. 8, 2020	vs. L.V.	9	103	11.4	27t	1
Nov. 22, 2020	vs. NYJ	16	145	9.1	21	1
Sept. 12, 2021	at Was.	9	100	11.1	17	0
Sept. 19, 2021	vs. Dal.	4	108	27.0	42	0
Nov. 7, 2021	at Phi.	12	104	8.7	18	0
Nov. 21, 2021	vs. Pit.	9	112	12.4	30	0

POSTSEASON 100-YARD RECEIVING GAMES — 1

Date	Opp.	Rec.	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD
Jan. 12, 2014*	at Den.	6	142	23.7	49	2

**AFC Divisional*

AUSTIN EKELER

END ZONE EKELER

With 12 rushing touchdowns and eight receiving scores last year, **RB Austin Ekeler** registered the sixth season in NFL history with at least eight rushing scores and eight touchdown catches. He's the only AFC player ever to do so.

Ekeler hauled in eight receiving scores for the second season in his career, joining Hall of Fame RB Marshall Faulk (2000 and '01) as the only running backs in the common draft era (since 1967) with multiple seasons of eight-plus touchdown grabs.

PLAYERS WITH EIGHT RUSHING TOUCHDOWNS AND EIGHT TOUCHDOWN CATCHES, SINGLE SEASON, NFL HISTORY

Season	Team	Player	Rush TDs	Rec. TDs
2021	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	12	8
2001	StL	RB Marshall Faulk	12	9
2000	StL	RB Marshall Faulk	18	8
1975	Min.	RB Chuck Foreman	13	9
1966	Dal.	RB Dan Reeves	8	8
1949	NYG	RB Gene Roberts	9	8

In the Week 11 win against Pittsburgh on *Sunday Night Football*, Ekeler scored four scrimmage touchdowns (two rushing, two receiving). He was the only AFC player that season to score a touchdown in each quarter of a single game. It marked Ekeler's third game of the season with a rushing score and a touchdown catch. He had an NFL-best four such performances in 2021, tying for the second-most in a season in NFL history.

Ekeler was the first running back to have multiple rushing scores and multiple receiving touchdowns in a game since 2011 (Maurice Jones-Drew). He was also the first Charger to have four scrimmage scores in a game since **RB Danny Woodhead** in 2015.

GAMES WITH A RUSHING TOUCHDOWN AND RECEIVING TOUCHDOWN, SINGLE SEASON, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Games
1.	1975	Min.	RB Chuck Foreman	5
2.	2021	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	4
	—	—	Eight Other Players	4

UNDER THE LIGHTS

In four prime-time games in 2021, **Austin Ekeler** scored nine scrimmage touchdowns, tying for the second-most in a single season in NFL history. His six scrimmage scores on *Sunday Night Football* tied for the most in a season ever (Dez Bryant in 2014, Randy Moss in 2007, LaDainian Tomlinson in 2006).

MOST PRIME-TIME SCRIMMAGE TDs, SINGLE SEASON, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Scrimmage TDs
1.	2007	N.E.	WR Randy Moss	11
2.	2021	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	9
	1995	Dal.	RB Emmitt Smith	9

HANDS TEAM

Austin Ekeler has solidified himself as one of the most dynamic receiving backs in the NFL. Entering his sixth pro year, he is already tied for the most receiving scores by a running back through their first six seasons in the common draft era (since 1967). The Western State Colorado product ranks tied for No. 8 in receiving touchdowns among running backs in the common draft era.

RECEIVING TOUCHDOWNS THROUGH FIRST SIX SEASONS, RBs, NFL, COMMON DRAFT ERA (SINCE 1967)

Rank	Team	Player	Receiving TDs
1.	LAC	Austin Ekeler	24
	N.E.	James White	24
3.	Min.	Chuck Foreman	23
	Phi.	Brian Westbrook	23
5.	N.O.	Alvin Kamara	20

CAREER RECEIVING TOUCHDOWNS, RUNNING BACKS, NFL, COMMON DRAFT ERA (SINCE 1967)

Rank	Team/s	Player	Receiving TDs
1.	Ind./StL	Marshall Faulk	36
2.	S.D./N.O./Phi.	Darren Sproles	32
3.	Phi./S.F.	Brian Westbrook	30
	S.D./Cin./T.B./Cle.	James Brooks	30
5.	Ari./Was./Buf./N.E.	Larry Centers	28
6.	Phi./Mia./N.E./NYJ	Keith Byars	27
7.	N.E.	James White	25
8.	LAC	Austin Ekeler	24
	Buf./S.D./Hou.*	Ronnie Harmon	24

*Houston Oilers

The 24 receiving touchdowns are the fifth-most in the common draft era by a running back with a single team.

RECEIVING TOUCHDOWNS WITH A SINGLE TEAM, RBs, NFL, COMMON DRAFT ERA (SINCE 1967)

Rank	Team	Player	Receiving TDs
1.	Eagles	Brian Westbrook	29
2.	Bengals	James Brooks	27
	Rams	Marshall Faulk	27
4.	Patriots	James White	25
5.	Chargers	Austin Ekeler	24

Ekeler has now hauled in at least two receiving scores in each of his five seasons, joining Hall of Famer Marcus Allen as the only running backs to do so since the 1970 NFL-AFL Merger. There has not been a running back over that span to have two or more receiving scores in each of their first six pro seasons.

SEASONS WITH MULTIPLE RECEIVING TDs, FIRST FIVE PROFESSIONAL SEASONS, RBs, NFL, SINCE 1970

Rank	Team	Player	No. of Seasons
1.	Chargers	Austin Ekeler	5
	Raiders	Marcus Allen	5
3.	—	16 Other Players	4

AUSTIN EKELER

A LEAGUE-LEADING SCORER

In 2021, **Austin Ekeler** continued to showcase his ability as one of the most versatile weapons in football. He ended the season tied for the league lead with 20 scrimmage touchdowns and ranked third in scrimmage yards among running backs.

Ekeler's eight games of 100-plus scrimmage yards tied for third in the NFL among running backs. His eight touchdown catches tied for No. 10 in the AFC, while his 12 touchdown runs ranked fourth in the conference.

SCRIMMAGE TOUCHDOWNS LEADERS, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Player	Scrimmage TDs
1.	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	20
	Ind.	RB Jonathan Taylor	20
3.	Ari.	RB James Conner	18
4.	Cin.	RB Joe Mixon	16
	LAR	WR Cooper Kupp	16

SCRIMMAGE YARDS LEADERS, RBs, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Player	Scrimmage Yards
1.	Ind.	Jonathan Taylor	2,171
2.	Pit.	Najee Harris	1,667
3.	LAC	Austin Ekeler	1,558
3.	Cin.	Joe Mixon	1,519
5.	Cle.	Nick Chubb	1,433

MAKING AN IMPACT

Austin Ekeler put forth one of the best offensive seasons in team history. His 20 scrimmage touchdowns tied Hall of Fame **RB LaDainian Tomlinson's** 2005 season for the second-most by a Charger in a single season.

Ekeler ended the season on an eight-game touchdown streak, tying for the fifth-longest streak in team history.

MOST TOUCHDOWNS, SINGLE SEASON, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Season	Player	Total TDs
1.	2006	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	31
2.	2021	RB Austin Ekeler	20
	2005	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	20
4.	1981	RB Chuck Muncie	19

MOST CONSECUTIVE GAMES WITH A TOUCHDOWN, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rk.	Player	Dates	Consec. Games
1.	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	Oct. 3, 2004-Oct. 16, 2005	18
2.	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	Oct. 15, 2006-Dec. 17, 2006	10
3.	TE Antonio Gates	Dec. 13, 2009-Oct. 10, 2010	9
	RB Natrone Means	Dec. 19, 1993-Oct. 16, 1994	9
5.	RB Austin Ekeler	Nov. 14, 2021-Present	8
	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	Nov. 23, 2003-Sept. 19, 2004	8



AN OLD HEAD ON YOUNG SHOULDERS

On a two-yard receiving touchdown in Week 10, **Austin Ekeler** reached 20 career receiving touchdowns. At 26 years, 181 days, he was the second running back in the common draft era (since 1967) to reach that mark before turning 27-years-old.

This season, the dynamic receiving back can become the youngest running back in the common draft era to reach 25 career touchdown catches.

RUNNING BACKS TO REACH 20 CAREER RECEIVING TOUCHDOWNS BEFORE TURNING 27-YEARS-OLD, COMMON DRAFT ERA (SINCE 1967)

Season	Team	Player	Age (Years-Days)
2021	N.O.	Alvin Kamara	26-161
2021	LAC	Austin Ekeler	26-181
1977	Min.	Chuck Foreman	26-333

YOUNGEST TO REACH 25 CAREER RECEIVING TDs, RUNNING BACKS, COMMON DRAFT ERA (SINCE 1967)

Rank	Team/s	Player	Age (Years-Days)
1.	Ind./StL	Marshall Faulk	28-265
2.	N.E.	James White	28-335
3.	Phi.	Brian Westbrook	29-13
4.	S.D./N.O.	Darren Sproles	29-193
—	LAC	Austin Ekeler	27-117*

*Age as of Sept. 11, 2022

Ekeler was already the sixth running back in the common draft era to eclipse 15 receiving scores before turning 26-years-old after hauling in his 15th touchdown catch in Week 16 of 2020.

RUNNING BACKS TO REACH 15 CAREER RECEIVING TOUCHDOWNS BEFORE TURNING 26-YEARS-OLD, COMMON DRAFT ERA (SINCE 1967)

Season	Team/s	Player	Age (Years-Days)
2020	LAC	Austin Ekeler	25-224
2020	N.O.	Alvin Kamara	25-148
2020	K.C./Cle.	Kareem Hunt	25-80
2019	Car.	Christian McCaffrey	23-170
1983	Buf.	Joe Cribbs	25-312
1975	Min.	Chuck Foreman	25-42

AUSTIN EKELER

SIGNED, SEALED, DELIVERED



In the fourth quarter of the Week 5 win against Cleveland, **Austin Ekeler** hauled in a receiving score and ran in two others to seal the victory. He became the first player in over a decade and just the fifth since at least 1991 to have three scrimmage touchdowns in a single fourth quarter.

PLAYERS WITH THREE-PLUS SCRIMMAGE TOUCHDOWNS IN A SINGLE FOURTH QUARTER, NFL, SINCE 1991

Season	Week	Team	Player	Scrimmage TDs
2021	5	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	3
2009	8	Hou.	RB Ryan Moats	3
2008	12	Atl.	RB Michael Turner	3
2002	1	K.C.	RB Priest Holmes	3
1991	16	S.D.	RB Rod Bernstine	3

100 MILES AND RUNNIN'

In the team's 45-10 win over Jacksonville in 2019, **Austin Ekeler** recorded the 35th 100-yard rushing and 100-yard receiving performance in league annals on just 12 offensive touches — the fewest in a 100/100 performance in NFL history.

Ekeler's effort was the fourth such performance by an undrafted running back in the common draft era (since 1967) and the third in team history (second by a Charger in the regular season.)

PLAYERS WITH 100 RUSHING YARDS AND 100 RECEIVING YARDS, SINGLE GAME, MAX. 15 TOUCHES, NFL HISTORY

Season	Team	Player	Rush Yds	Rec. Yds	Touches
2019	LAC	Austin Ekeler	101	112	12
1986	Dal.	Herschel Walker	122	170	15
1954	ChiC*	Ollie Matson	115	161	15

*Chicago Cardinals

PLAYERS WITH 100 RUSHING YARDS AND 100 RECEIVING YARDS, SINGLE GAME, CHARGERS HISTORY

Season	Player	Rush Att	Rush Yds	Rec.	Rec. Yds
2019	Austin Ekeler	8	101	4	112
1985	Lionel James	12	127	5	118
1963	Keith Lincoln*	13	206	7	123

*Only postseason 100/100 performance in pro football history

EKELER IN THE RECORD BOOK

In 2021, **Austin Ekeler** totaled 124 points, good for the second-most by a Chargers non-kicker in a single season. His performance in the Week 11 win against Pittsburgh saw him record four touchdowns and 24 total points, tying for No. 2 in team annals. Ekeler also had a three-touchdown game, which is tied for 12th in franchise history.

MOST POINTS SCORED, NON-KICKERS, SINGLE SEASON, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Season	Player	Points
1.	2006	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	186
2.	2021	RB Austin Ekeler	124
3.	2005	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	120

MOST POINTS SCORED, SINGLE GAME, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Game	Player	Points
1.	Nov. 22, 1981 at Oak.	TE Kellen Winslow	30
2.	Nov. 21, 2021 vs. Pit.	RB Austin Ekeler	24
	Dec. 20, 2015 vs. Mia.	RB Danny Woodhead	24
	Oct. 14, 2007 vs. Oak.	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	24
	Nov. 19, 2006 at Den.	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	24
	Nov. 12, 2006 at Cin.	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	24
	Oct. 15, 2006 at S.F.	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	24
	Nov. 6, 2005 at NYJ	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	24
	Nov. 29, 1981 vs. Den.	RB Chuck Muncie	24
	Sept. 16, 1979 vs. Buf.	RB Clarence Williams	24
	Dec. 1, 1968 at Den.	FL Lance Alworth	24
12.	Dec. 13, 2008 at K.C.	WR Mike Williams	20

MOST TOUCHDOWNS, SINGLE GAME, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Game	Player	Touchdowns
1.	Nov. 22, 1981 at Oak.	TE Kellen Winslow	5
2.	Nov. 21, 2021 vs. Pit.	RB Austin Ekeler	4
	Dec. 20, 2015 vs. Mia.	RB Danny Woodhead	4
	Oct. 14, 2007 vs. Oak.	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	4
	Nov. 19, 2006 at Den.	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	4
	Nov. 12, 2006 at Cin.	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	4
	Oct. 15, 2006 at S.F.	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	4
	Nov. 6, 2005 at NYJ	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	4
	Nov. 29, 1981 vs. Den.	RB Chuck Muncie	4
	Sept. 16, 1979 vs. Buf.	RB Clarence Williams	4
	Dec. 1, 1968 at Den.	FL Lance Alworth	4
12.	Oct. 10, 2021 vs. Cle.	RB Austin Ekeler	3
	—	44 Other Performances	3

AUSTIN EKELER

EKELER IN TEAM HISTORY

Austin Ekeler has emerged into the top-10 in Chargers history in multiple rushing categories — ranking ninth in rushing attempts and yards. He sits at No. 8 in rushing touchdowns and ranks third in rushing average (min. 500 attempts).

CAREER RUSHING ATTEMPTS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Seasons	Player	Rushing Attempts
1.	2001-09	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	2,880
2.	2015-19	RB Melvin Gordon III	1,059
3.	1989-93	RB Marion Butts	1,031
4.	1960-68	RB Paul Lowe	1,015
5.	1993-95, '98-99	RB Natrone Means	1,013
6.	2010-14	RB Ryan Mathews	923
7.	1980-84	RB Chuck Muncie	773
8.	1974-80	RB Don Woods	713
9.	2017-Present	RB Austin Ekeler	607
10.	1961-66, '68	RB Keith Lincoln	573

CAREER RUSHING YARDS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Seasons	Player	Rushing Yards
1.	2001-09	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	12,490
2.	1960-68	RB Paul Lowe	4,972
3.	1989-93	RB Marion Butts	4,297
4.	2015-19	RB Melvin Gordon III	4,240
5.	2010-14	RB Ryan Mathews	4,061
6.	1993-95, '98-99	RB Natrone Means	3,885
7.	1980-84	RB Chuck Muncie	3,309
8.	1974-80	RB Don Woods	2,858
9.	2017-Present	RB Austin Ekeler	2,812
10.	1961-66, '68	RB Keith Lincoln	2,698

CAREER RUSHING TOUCHDOWNS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Seasons	Player	Rushing TDs
1.	2001-09	RB LaDainian Tomlinson	138
2.	1980-84	RB Chuck Muncie	43
3.	1960-68	RB Paul Lowe	38
4.	2015-19	RB Melvin Gordon III	36
5.	1993-95, '98-99	RB Natrone Means	34
6.	1989-93	RB Marion Butts	31
7.	2010-14	RB Ryan Mathews	23
8.	2017-Present	RB Austin Ekeler	21
9.	2008-11	RB Mike Tolbert	20

CAREER RUSHING AVERAGE, MIN. 500 ATTEMPTS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Seasons	Player	Rushing Avg.
1.	1960-68	RB Paul Lowe	4.90
2.	1961-66, '68	RB Keith Lincoln	4.71
3.	2017-Present	RB Austin Ekeler	4.63
4.	1967-70	RB Dickie Post	4.43
5.	2010-14	RB Ryan Mathews	4.40



ELECTRIC EKELER

Through five pro seasons, Austin Ekeler has established himself as one of the best receiving running backs in Chargers history. He has already set the all-time Chargers record for receiving touchdowns by a running back and ranks No. 3 for receptions and receiving yards by a running back.

CAREER RECEPTIONS, RBs, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Seasons	Player	Receptions
1.	2001-09	LaDainian Tomlinson	530
2.	1990-95	Ronnie Harmon	378
3.	2017-Present	Austin Ekeler	282
4.	1995-2002	Terrell Fletcher	259

CAREER RECEIVING YARDS, RBs, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Seasons	Player	Receiving Yards
1.	2001-09	LaDainian Tomlinson	3,955
2.	1990-95	Ronnie Harmon	3,939
3.	2017-Present	Austin Ekeler	2,726
4.	1990-95	Ronnie Harmon	1,978

KEEPING IT 100

Austin Ekeler registered the second 100-yard rushing performance of his career in Week 4, setting a single-game career high for rushing yards in the process. In 2019, he posted three games with 100-plus receiving yards to set a team record for career 100-yard receiving games by a running back.

100-YARD RUSHING OUTPUTS — 2

Date	Opp.	Att	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD
Dec. 8, 2019	at Jax.	8	101	12.6	35	0
Oct. 4, 2021	vs. L.V.	15	117	7.8	20	1

100-YARD RECEIVING OUTPUTS — 3

Date	Opp.	Rec.	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD
Oct. 20, 2019	at Ten.	7	118	16.9	41t	1
Nov. 18, 2019	vs. K.C.	8	108	13.5	37	0
Dec. 8, 2019	at Jax.	4	112	28.0	84t	1

MIKE WILLIAMS

CLUTCH SCORING GRABS

Mike Williams hauled in seven touchdowns from QB Justin Herbert in the fourth quarter or overtime this year — five were go-ahead scores and another was a game-tying touchdown.

His five go-ahead touchdowns in the fourth quarter or overtime set a single-season NFL record, while his six game-tying or go-ahead scores in the fourth quarter or overtime were also an all-time best in a season. Williams' seven touchdown grabs in the fourth quarter tied for the most in a season since at least 1991.

GO-AHEAD TOUCHDOWNS IN FOURTH QUARTER OR OVERTIME, SINGLE SEASON, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Go-Ahead TDs
1.	2021	LAC	WR Mike Williams	5
2.	2021	LAR	WR Cooper Kupp	4
	2014	Min.	RB Matt Asiata	4
	2012	Atl.	RB Michael Turner	4
	1989	G.B.	WR Sterling Sharpe	4
	1985	Hou.*	RB Mike Rozier	4
	1985	S.F.	RB Roger Craig	4
	1979	StL	RB Ottis Anderson	4

*Houston Oilers

GAME-TYING OR GO-AHEAD TOUCHDOWNS IN FOURTH QUARTER OR OVERTIME, SINGLE SEASON, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Go-Ahead TDs
1.	2021	LAC	WR Mike Williams	6
2.	1989	G.B.	WR Sterling Sharpe	5
3.	—	—	15 Other Players	4

FOURTH QUARTER RECEIVING TOUCHDOWNS, SINGLE SEASON, NFL, SINCE 1991

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Receiving TDs
1.	2021	LAC	WR Mike Williams	7
	2020	Min.	WR Adam Thielen	7
	2004	Car.	WR Mushin Muhammad	7
	2002	Ind.	WR Marvin Harrison	7
	2000	S.F.	WR Terrell Owens	7
	1995	Cin.	WR Carl Pickens	7

Since entering the NFL in 2017, Williams has recorded a league-leading seven go-ahead scores in the fourth quarter or overtime.

GO-AHEAD TOUCHDOWNS IN FOURTH QUARTER OR OVERTIME, NFL, SINCE 2017

Rank	Team/s	Player	Go-Ahead TDs
1.	LAC	WR Mike Williams	7
2.	LAR	WR Cooper Kupp	6
3.	G.B.	WR Davante Adams	5
	Hou./Ari.	WR DeAndre Hopkins	5
	LAC/Den.	RB Melvin Gordon III	5
	L.V.	RB Josh Jacobs	5
	Ten.	RB Derrick Henry	5
8.	—	Seven Other Players	4



LOOK UP AT THE LEADERBOARD

Mike Williams finished the 2021 season among the conference leaders in receiving yards and touchdowns. His team-best 1,146 yards ranked No. 6 in the AFC while his nine receiving touchdowns tied for third.

RECEIVING YARDS LEADERS, AFC, 2021

Rank	Team	Player	Receiving Yards
1.	Cin.	WR Ja'Marr Chase	1,455
2.	Bal.	TE Mark Andrews	1,361
3.	K.C.	WR Tyreek Hill	1,239
4.	Buf.	WR Stefon Diggs	1,225
5.	Pit.	WR Diontae Johnson	1,161
6.	LAC	WR Mike Williams	1,146
7.	LAC	WR Keenan Allen	1,086

RECEIVING TOUCHDOWNS LEADERS, AFC, 2021

Rank	Team	Player	Receiving TDs
1.	Cin.	WR Ja'Marr Chase	13
2.	Buf.	WR Stefon Diggs	10
3.	LAC	WR Mike Williams	9
	Bal.	TE Mark Andrews	9
	Buf.	TE Dawson Knox	9
	K.C.	WR Tyreek Hill	9
	K.C.	TE Travis Kelce	9
	N.E.	TE Hunter Henry	9
10.	LAC	RB Austin Ekeler	8
	Pit.	WR Diontae Johnson	8

MIKE WILLIAMS



BIG-PLAY MIKE WILLIAMS

Mike Williams caught a conference-leading nine receptions of 40-plus yards in 2021. Since his breakout year in his second pro season in 2018, Williams' 21 catches of 40 or more yards are the second-most in the NFL.

RECEPTIONS OF 40-PLUS YARDS, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Player	40-Yard Receptions
1.	LAC	WR Mike Williams	9
	LAR	WR Cooper Kupp	9
	S.F.	WR Deebo Samuel	9
4.	Cin.	WR Ja'Marr Chase	8
5.	Sea.	WR Tyler Lockett	6

RECEPTIONS OF 40-PLUS YARDS, NFL, SINCE 2018

Rank	Team	Player	40-Yard Receptions
1.	K.C.	WR Tyreek Hill	22
2.	LAC	WR Mike Williams	21
3.	Buf.	WR Stefon Diggs	19
4.	G.B.	WR Marquez Valdes-Scantling	18
	LAR	WR Cooper Kupp	18
	T.B.	WR Mike Evans	18
	Sea.	WR Tyler Lockett	18

WILLIAMS ABOVE AVERAGE

Since entering the NFL in 2017, Mike Williams has 227 catches for 3,662 yards for a career receiving average of 16.1 yards. His career average is the second-best in the NFL since 2017 among players with at least 200 catches. Williams' 20.4 average in 2019 is still the best in a single-season over that span (min. 40 rec.).

RECEIVING AVG. LEADERS, MIN. 200 REC., NFL, SINCE 2017

Rank	Team/s	Player	Receiving Avg.
1.	Det./NYG	WR Kenny Golladay	16.3
2.	LAC	WR Mike Williams	16.1
3.	T.B.	WR Mike Evans	15.6

RECEIVING AVERAGE LEADERS, SINGLE SEASON, MIN. 40 RECEPTIONS, NFL, SINCE 2017

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Rec. Avg.
1.	2019	LAC	WR Mike Williams	20.4
2.	2019	Ten.	WR A.J. Brown	20.2
3.	2018	T.B.	WR DeSean Jackson	18.9

KEEPING IT 100

Mike Williams has topped 100 receiving yards in eight career games — including a career-high four in 2021. He has hauled in at least one touchdown in five of his last six 100-yard performances.

100-YARD RECEIVING OUTPUTS — 8

Date	Opp.	Rec.	Yds	Avg.	Lg	TD
Nov. 3, 2019	vs. G.B.	3	111	37.0	56	0
Dec. 1, 2019	at Den.	5	117	23.4	52	0
Oct. 12, 2020	at N.O.	5	109	21.8	64t	2
Jan. 3, 2021	at K.C.	6	108	18.0	48t	1
Sept. 26, 2021	at K.C.	7	122	17.4	43	2
Oct. 10, 2021	vs. Cle.	8	165	20.6	72t	2
Dec. 5, 2021	at Cin.	5	110	22.0	47	0
Jan. 9, 2022	at L.V.	9	119	13.2	47	1

JOEY BOSHA



NOT YOUR AVERAGE JOEY

Since entering the NFL in 2016, **Joey Bosa** has been an absolute force, recording the sixth-best sacks-per-game over that span (min. 60 games played).

SACKS PER GAME, MIN. 60 GAMES PLAYED, SINCE 2016

Rank	Team/s	Player	Sacks/Game
1.	Pit.	LB T.J. Watt	0.94
2.	Cle.	DE Myles Garrett	0.86
3.	Ari./L.V.	OLB Chandler Jones	0.85
4.	LAR	DT Aaron Donald	0.82
5.	Min.	DE Danielle Hunter	0.77
6.	LAC	OLB Joey Bosa	0.73
7.	Den./LAR/Buf.	OLB Von Miller	0.71

Bosa has also been one of the top-producing pass rushers since entering the NFL. His 58.0 career sacks rank No. 6 over that span.

SACKS LEADERS, NFL, SINCE 2016

Rank	Team/s	Player	Sacks
1.	LAR	DT Aaron Donald	78.0
2.	Pit.	LB T.J. Watt	72.0
3.	Ari./L.V.	OLB Chandler Jones	71.5
4.	N.O.	DE Cameron Jordan	68.0
5.	Cle.	DE Myles Garrett	58.5
6.	LAC	OLB Joey Bosa	58.0
7.	Oak./Chi./LAC	LB Khalil Mack	57.5
8.	Den./LAR/Buf.	OLB Von Miller	55.5
	Jax./Min./Bal./L.V./Ind.	DE Yannick Ngakoue	55.5

ONE OF A KIND

With 8.5 sacks in his first eight games of 2017, **Joey Bosa** brought his career total to 19.0 sacks over his first 20 career games. That topped the previous NFL record of 18.5 set by Aldon Smith in 2012.

SACKS, FIRST 20 CAREER GAMES, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Team	Player	Sacks
1.	Chargers	DE Joey Bosa	19.0
2.	49ers	LB Aldon Smith	18.5
3.	Packers	LB Clay Matthews	17.0

FORCING THE ISSUE

In Week 17, **Joey Bosa** sacked Las Vegas QB Derek Carr and forced a fumble on the play. Bosa has 12 strip-sacks in his career and leads the NFL with seven strip-sacks this season. Bosa's seven strip-sacks are the most by a Chargers defender in a single season since at least 2000.

STRIP-SACKS LEADERS, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Player	Strip Sacks
1.	LAC	OLB Joey Bosa	7
2.	Ari.	OLB Chandler Jones	5
3.	Chi.	LB Robert Quinn	4
	Pit.	LB T.J. Watt	4

FORCED FUMBLES LEADERS, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Player	Forced Fumbles
1.	Ind.	LB Darius Leonard	8
2.	LAC	OLB Joey Bosa	7
3.	S.F.	CB Josh Norman	6

A PRO BOWL PASS RUSHER

Last year, **Joey Bosa** was named a Pro Bowler for the fourth time in his career. He joined Hall of Fame **LB Junior Seau** as the only Chargers defenders to be selected to four Pro Bowls over the first five seasons of a career.

MOST PRO BOWL SELECTIONS, FIRST FIVE SEASONS, DEFENSIVE PLAYERS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Seasons	Player	Pro Bowls
1.	1990-94	LB Junior Seau	5
2.	2016-21	OLB Joey Bosa	4
3.	2005-10	LB Shawne Merriman	3
	1986-92	DE Leslie O'Neal	3
	1975-80	DT Louie Kelcher	3

PRESSURE COOKER

In his pro career, **Joey Bosa** has totaled 129 quarterback hits, 123 hurries and 250 pressures — the latter of which rank No. 3 since he entered the NFL in 2016.

DEFENSIVE PRESSURES, NFL, SINCE 2016

Rank	Team/s	Player	Pressures
1.	LAR	DT Aaron Donald	310
2.	Oak./Chi.	LB Khalil Mack	256
3.	LAC	OLB Joey Bosa	250
4.	N.O.	DE Cameron Jordan	241
5.	Pit.	LB T.J. Watt	239

JOEY BOSA

BOSA'S SACKS BY PASSER

Joey Bosa has 58.0 career sacks. He has sacked Las Vegas QB Derek Carr eight times in his career, more than he's sacked any other quarterback. Bosa has brought down 36 different passers in his career, including 13 more than once. Below is a look at his career sacks by quarterback:

REGULAR-SEASON CAREER SACKS BY PASSER (58.0)

Sacks	Passer	Most Recent Sack
8.0	QB Derek Carr	Jan. 9, 2022 at L.V.
3.5	QB Trevor Siemian	Oct. 22, 2017 vs. Den.
2.5	QB Patrick Mahomes	Dec. 16, 2021 vs. K.C.
	QB Gardner Minshew II	Oct. 25, 2020 vs. Jax.
	QB Josh Rosen	Sept. 29, 2019 at Mia.
2.0	QB Josh Allen	Nov. 29, 2020 at Buf.
	QB Robert Griffin III	Dec. 24, 2016 at Cle.
	QB Eli Manning	Oct. 8, 2015 at NYG
	QB Ben Roethlisberger	Nov. 21, 2021 vs. Pit.
	QB Matt Ryan	Oct. 23, 2016 at Atl.
	QB Alex Smith	Sept. 24, 2017 vs. K.C.
	QB Ryan Tannehill	Oct. 20, 2019 at Ten.
	QB Mitchell Trubisky	Oct. 27, 2019 at Chi.
1.5	QB Lamar Jackson	Oct. 17, 2021 at Bal.
	QB Aaron Rodgers	Nov. 3, 2019 vs. G.B.
1.0	QB Matt Barkley	Nov. 29, 2020 at Buf.
	QB Blake Bortles	Nov. 12, 2017 at Jax.
	QB Tom Brady	Oct. 29, 2017 at N.E.
	QB Drew Brees	Oct. 12, 2020 at N.O.
	QB Teddy Bridgewater	Sept. 27, 2020 vs. Car.
	QB Jacoby Brissett	Sept. 8, 2019 vs. Ind.
	QB Joe Burrow	Sept. 13, 2020 at Cin.
	QB Kirk Cousins	Nov. 14, 2021 vs. Min.
	QB Jeff Driskel	Dec. 9, 2018 vs. Cin.
	QB Joe Flacco	Oct. 6, 2019 vs. Den.
	QB Ryan Fitzpatrick	Sept. 12, 2021 at Was.
	QB Mike Glennon	Dec. 12, 2021 vs. NYG
	QB Jalen Hurts	Nov. 7, 2021 at Phi.
	QB Case Keenum	Dec. 30, 2017 at Den.
	QB DeShone Kizer	Dec. 3, 2017 vs. Cle.
	QB Drew Lock	Nov. 28, 2021 at Den.
	QB Cam Newton	Dec. 11, 2016 at Car.
	QB Tyrod Taylor	Nov. 19, 2017 vs. Buf.
	QB Jameis Winston	Dec. 4, 2016 vs. T.B.
0.5	QB Brock Osweiler	Nov. 27, 2016 at Hou.
	QB Deshaun Watson	Sept. 22, 2019 vs. Hou.

POSTSEASON CAREER SACKS BY PASSER (1.0)

Sacks	Passer	Most Recent Sack
1.0	QB Lamar Jackson	Jan. 6, 2019 at Bal.* *AFC Wild Card

BRING THE HEAT

Joey Bosa ranks fourth for sacks in team history after reaching 50 for his career. He eclipsed 50 in his 67th game of his career, setting the mark for the fastest by any player in Chargers history.

CAREER SACKS LEADERS, CHARGERS HISTORY SINCE 1982

Rank	Seasons	Player	Sacks
1.	1986-95	DE Leslie O'Neal	105.5
2.	2004-12	LB Shaun Phillips	69.5
3.	1984-90	DE Lee Williams	65.5
4.	2016-Present	OLB Joey Bosa	58.0
5.	2012-20	DE Melvin Ingram III	49.0
6.	1990-2002	LB Junior Seau	47.0

FEWEST GAMES TO 50 SACKS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Seasons	Player	Games
1.	2016-21	OLB Joey Bosa	67
2.	1986-91	DE Leslie O'Neal	70
3.	1984-89	DE Lee Williams	75
4.	2004-10	LB Shaun Phillips	96



DERWIN JAMES JR.

A PRO BOWL TALENT

Last year, **Derwin James Jr.**, became the sixth Chargers defender ever to make multiple Pro Bowls within the first four seasons of a career. He was again tabbed as an AFC starter at safety.

MOST PRO BOWL SELECTIONS, FIRST FOUR SEASONS, DEFENSIVE PLAYERS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rank	Seasons	Player	Pro Bowls
1.	2005-08	LB Shawne Merriman	3
	1990-93	LB Junior Seau	3
3.	2018-21	S Derwin James Jr.	2
	2016-19	OLB Joey Bosa	2
	1986-92	DE Leslie O'Neal	2
	1975-80	DT Louie Kelcher	2

A NOSE FOR THE BALL

Derwin James Jr., bounced back from injury to be a defensive leader for the Chargers, totaling 118 tackles on the season to rank No. 3 in the NFL among defensive backs.

TACKLES LEADERS, DEFENSIVE BACKS, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Player	Tackles
1.	Pit.	S Minkah Fitzpatrick	124
2.	Ari.	S Jalen Thompson	120
3.	LAC	S Derwin James Jr.	118
4.	NYG	DB Logan Ryan	117
5.	L.V.	S Johnathan Abram	114
	Min.	S Harrison Smith	114

COMEBACK PLAYER OF THE YEAR CANDIDATE

After appearing in just five games in the 2019-20 seasons, **Derwin James Jr.**, totaled 118 tackles in 2021.

James became the first defensive back and eighth player since 2000 to post 100 tackles after missing the entire previous season due to injury. The other players were all linebackers and two of those players — Sean Lee and NaVorro Bowman in 2015 — were selected to the Pro Bowl for their efforts while Bowman was also recognized by *The Associated Press* as a first-team All-Pro.

PLAYERS WITH 100 TACKLES AFTER MISSING ENTIRE PREVIOUS SEASON DUE TO INJURY, NFL, SINCE 2000

Season	Team/s	Player	Tackles
2021	LAC	S Derwin James Jr.*	118
2020	NYJ/Pit.	LB Avery Williamson	111
2018	Mia.	LB Raekwon McMillan	105
2015	Dal.	LB Sean Lee*	128
	S.F.	LB NaVorro Bowman**	154
2014	K.C.	LB Josh Mauga	103
	Was.	LB Keenan Robinson	108
2011	Cle.	LB D'Qwell Jackson	158

*Pro Bowl Selection

†Associated Press First-Team All-Pro



A GAME-WRECKER

Derwin James Jr., posted 118 tackles, two interceptions, two sacks, three forced fumbles, five passes defended, seven tackles for loss and seven quarterback hits. He was the first Charger to force three fumbles in the team's first seven games of a season since **DE Marcellus Wiley** in 2001. James is the fourth defensive back since at least 2000 to have 100 tackles, three forced fumbles, multiple sacks and multiple interceptions in a single season.

He was one of five NFL defenders in 2021 to have at least 100 tackles, multiple interceptions, a sack and multiple forced fumbles. Another was a teammate, **LB Kyzir White**, who had 144 tackles on the year. They were the first pair of Chargers teammates to each have 100 tackles in the same season since **S Rodney Harrison** and Hall of Fame **LB Junior Seau** in 2000.

DEFENSIVE BACKS WITH 100 TACKLES, THREE FORCED FUMBLES, MULTIPLE SACKS AND MULTIPLE INTERCEPTIONS, SINGLE SEASON, NFL, SINCE 2000

Season	Team	Player	Sacks	FF	Tackles
2021	LAC	S Derwin James Jr.	2.0	3	118
2019	Ten.	CB Logan Ryan	4.5	4	113
2004	N.E.	S Rodney Harrison	3.0	3	129
2000	Car.	S Mike Minter	2.0	3	116

DEFENDERS WITH 100 TACKLES, MULTIPLE FORCED FUMBLES, MULTIPLE INTs AND A SACK, NFL, 2021

Team	Player	Sacks	INTs	FF	Tackles
G.B.	LB De'Vondre Campbell	2.0	2	2	145
LAC	LB Kyzir White	1.0	2	2	144
Was.	LB Cole Holcomb	1.0	2	2	142
LAC	S Derwin James Jr.	2.0	2	3	118
Min.	S Xavier Woods	1.0	3	2	107

In Week 5, he posted 16 tackles (nine solo) and a sack on the day, including 13 tackles (press box totals) in the first half. James is the just the second defensive back since 2000 to record a game with 16 tackles and a sack, while his 16 tackles were the most by a Charger in a single game since Eric Weddle posted 16 in 2010.

DERWIN JAMES JR.

DERWIN'S PICKS AND SACKS BY PASSER

Derwin James Jr., has recorded five interceptions and 5.5 sacks in his career. He has brought down Baker Mayfield the most, totaling 1.5 sacks of the Oklahoma product. Below is a look at his career regular-season sacks and interceptions by passer:

REGULAR-SEASON CAREER INTs BY PASSER (5)

INTs	Passer	Most Recent INT
1	QB Derek Carr	Oct. 4, 2021 vs. L.V.
	QB Jared Goff	Sept. 23, 2018 at LAR
	QB Drew Lock	Nov. 28, 2021 at Den.
	QB Ben Roethlisberger	Dec. 2, 2018 at Pit.
	QB Josh Rosen	Nov. 25, 2018 vs. Ari.

REGULAR-SEASON CAREER SACKS BY PASSER (5.5)

Sacks	Passer	Most Recent Sack
1.5	QB Baker Mayfield	Oct. 10, 2021 vs. Cle.
1.0	QB Josh Allen	Sept. 16, 2018 at Buf.
	QB C.J. Beathard	Sept. 30, 2018 vs. S.F.
	QB Patrick Mahomes	Sept. 9, 2018 vs. K.C.
0.5	QB Joe Burrow	Dec. 5, 2021 at Cin.
	QB Dak Prescott	Sept. 19, 2021 vs. Dal.



ROOKIE SENSATION

Derwin James Jr., re-wrote NFL rookie record books in 2018 en route to being named a Pro Bowler and first-team All-Pro from *The Associated Press*. With two sacks and an INT through his first three career games, he became just the second DB in NFL history to do so in a non-strike season.

James ended up setting an NFL record among DBs with 3.5 sacks in his first six career games. James' 3.5 sacks were good enough for the most by a DB through 11 career games.

MOST SACKS IN FIRST 11 CAREER GAMES, DBs, NFL HISTORY

Rank	Season/s	Team	Player	Sacks
1.	2018	LAC	Derwin James	3.5
2.	2006-07	N.O.	Roman Harper	3.0
	2004-05	NYG	Gibril Wilson	3.0
	2002	StL	James Whitley	3.0
	1987	Dal.	Tommy Haynes*	3.0
	1985-86	NYJ	Lester Lyles	3.0
	1984	NYJ	Russell Carter	3.0
	1983	Dal.	Bill Bates	3.0

*Replacement player due to NFL players strike

DBs WITH MULTIPLE SACKS AND AN INTERCEPTION, FIRST THREE CAREER GAMES, NFL HISTORY

Season	Team	Player	Sacks	INTs
2018	LAC	Derwin James	2.0	1
1987	Sea.	Charles Glaze*	2.0	2
1987	Dal.	Tommy Haynes*	3.0	3
1983	Dal.	Bill Bates	2.0	1

*Replacement player due to NFL players strike

KHALIL MACK



MACK ATTACK

Since entering the NFL in 2014, **Khalil Mack** has totaled 76.5 sacks, good for the fifth-most in over that span. He's one of football's top defenders at forcing turnovers, ranking tied No. 2 in strip-sacks and tied for third in forced fumbles since entering the professional ranks.

SACKS LEADERS, NFL, SINCE 2014

Rank	Team/s	Player	Sacks
1.	LAR	DT Aaron Donald	98.0
2.	N.E./Ari./L.V.	OLB Chandler Jones	90.0
3.	N.O.	DE Cameron Jordan	85.5
4.	Den./LAR/Buf.	OLB Von Miller	80.5
5.	Oak./Chi./LAC	OLB Khalil Mack	76.5
6.	K.C./Ind./Bal.	OLB Justin Houston	75.5

STRIP-SACKS LEADERS, NFL, SINCE 2014

Rank	Team/s	Player	Strip Sacks
1.	N.E./Ari./L.V.	OLB Chandler Jones	26
2.	Oak./Chi./LAC	OLB Khalil Mack	18
	StL/LAR/Mia./Dal./Chi.	LB Robert Quinn	18
4.	LAR	DT Aaron Donald	17
	Jax./Min./Bal./L.V./Ind.	DE Yannick Ngakoue	17

FORCED FUMBLES LEADERS, NFL, SINCE 2014

Rank	Team/s	Player	Forced Fumbles
1.	N.E./Ari./L.V.	OLB Chandler Jones	29
2.	T.B.	Lavonte David	24
3.	Oak./Chi./LAC	OLB Khalil Mack	23
	LAR	DT Aaron Donald	23
	StL/LAR/Mia./Dal./Chi.	LB Robert Quinn	23
6.	Pit.	LB T.J. Watt	22

MACK'S SACKS AND PICKS BY PASSER

Khalil Mack has sacked 36 different players in the regular season for a total of 76.5 career sacks. He dropped QB Brock Osweiler six times in his career, including five times in a single game. Mack has also picked off three passes, including two that he returned for a touchdown. Below is a look at his career regular-season sacks and interceptions by quarterback:

REGULAR-SEASON CAREER SACKS BY PASSER (76.5)

Sacks	Passer	Most Recent Sack
6.0	QB Brock Osweiler	Nov. 21, 2016 at Oak.
5.5	QB Aaron Rodgers	Oct. 17, 2021 at Chi.
	QB Alex Smith	Dec. 10, 2017 at K.C.
5.0	QB Trevor Siemian	Nov. 26, 2017 vs. Den.
4.0	QB Kirk Cousins	Dec. 20, 2020 at Min.
3.0	QB Tom Brady	Oct. 8, 2020 vs. T.B.
	QB Jared Goff	Oct. 3, 2021 vs. Det.
	QB Josh McCown	Sept. 17, 2017 vs. NYJ
	QB Dak Prescott	Dec. 5, 2019 vs. Dal.
2.0	QB Sam Bradford	Sept. 23, 2018 at Ari.
	QB Teddy Bridgewater	Oct. 18, 2020 at Car.
	QB Joe Flacco	Sept. 15, 2019 at Den.
	QB Daniel Jones	Sept. 20, 2020 vs. NYG
	QB Colin Kaepernick	Dec. 7, 2017 vs. S.F.
	QB Case Keenum	Sept. 23, 2019 at Was.
	QB Marcus Mariota	Nov. 29, 2015 at Ten.
	QB Baker Mayfield	Sept. 26, 2021 at Cle.
	QB Philip Rivers	Oct. 27, 2019 vs. LAC
	QB Geno Smith	Dec. 3, 2017 vs. NYG
	QB Matthew Stafford	Nov. 11, 2018 vs. Det.
	QB Jameis Winston	Oct. 30, 2016 at T.B.
1.0	QB Blake Bortles	Oct. 23, 2016 at Jax.
	QB Drew Brees	Nov. 1, 2020 vs. N.O.
	QB Joe Burrow	Sept. 19, 2021 vs. Cin.
	QB Derek Carr	Oct. 10, 2021 at L.V.
	QB Jay Cutler	Oct. 4, 2015 at Chi.
	QB Ryan Fitzpatrick	Sept. 30, 2018 vs. T.B.
	QB DeShone Kizer	Sept. 9, 2018 at G.B.
	QB Patrick Mahomes	Dec. 22, 2019 vs. K.C.
	QB Eli Manning	Dec. 2, 2018 at NYG
	QB Cam Newton	Nov. 27, 2016 vs. Car.
	QB Kyle Orton	Dec. 21, 2014 vs. Buf.
	QB Tyrod Taylor	Dec. 4, 2016 vs. Buf.
	QB Deshaun Watson	Dec. 13, 2020 vs. Hou.
	QB Russell Wilson	Sept. 17, 2018 vs. Sea.
0.5	QB Matt Ryan	Sept. 27, 2020 at Atl.

REGULAR-SEASON CAREER INTs BY PASSER (3)

INTs	Passer	Most Recent INT
1	QB Kirk Cousins	Nov. 16, 2020 vs. Min.
	QB DeShone Kizer	Sept. 9, 2018 at G.B.
	QB Cam Newton	Nov. 27, 2016 vs. Car.

J.C. JACKSON

MR. INT

Entering his fifth season in the NFL, **J.C. Jackson** has logged 25 interceptions. His 25 picks are already among the most through a player's first five pro seasons in the Super Bowl era (since 1966).

INTERCEPTIONS THROUGH FIRST FIVE SEASONS, NFL, SUPER BOWL ERA (SINCE 1966)

Rank	Team/s	Player	Interceptions
1.	Det.	CB Lem Barney	35
2.	Dal.	CB Everson Walls	34
3.	K.C.	S Gary Barbaro	31
4.	Mia.	S Jake Scott	29
5.	Oak.	CB Lester Hayes	28
6.	K.C./LAR/Bal.	CB Marcus Peters	27
	Bal.	S Ed Reed	27
8.	Sea.	CB Richard Sherman	26
	Pit.	S Darren Perry	26
	Phx.*/Ari.	CB Aeneas Williams	26
	Sea.	S Kenny Easley	26
	Sea.	S John Harris	26
13.	N.E./LAC	CB J.C. Jackson	25
	—	Six Other Players	25

**Phoenix Cardinals*

BALL HAWK

J.C. Jackson has logged 27 total takeaways (25 interceptions, two fumble recoveries) in his career. He leads all NFL players in takeaways and interceptions since he entered the league in 2018.

INTERCEPTION LEADERS, NFL, SINCE 2018

Rank	Team/s	Player	Interceptions
1.	N.E./LAC	CB J.C. Jackson	25
2.	Mia.	CB Xavien Howard	23
3.	Den.	S Justin Simmons	17
4.	Det./Sea.	S Quandre Diggs	16
5.	Hou./K.C./N.O.	S Tyrann Mathieu	15
	Ten.	S Kevin Byard	15

DEFENSIVE TAKEAWAY LEADERS, NFL, SINCE 2018

Rank	Team/s	Player	Takeaways
1.	N.E./LAC	CB J.C. Jackson	27
2.	Mia.	CB Xavien Howard	26
3.	Hou./K.C./N.O.	S Tyrann Mathieu	19
4.	Den.	S Justin Simmons	18
	Mia./Pit.	S Minkah Fitzpatrick	18



J.C.'S INTERCEPTIONS BY PASSER

J.C. Jackson has recorded 25 career interceptions, including Bills QB Josh Allen four times. Below is a look at his career regular-season interceptions by passer:

REGULAR-SEASON CAREER INTs BY PASSER (25)

INTs	Passer	Most Recent INT
4	QB Josh Allen	Nov. 1, 2020 at Buf.
3	QB Sam Darnold	Nov. 7, 2021 at Car.
2	QB Andy Dalton	Dec. 15, 2019 at Cin.
	QB Ryan Tannehill	Nov. 28, 2021 vs. Ten.
	QB Zach Wilson	Sept. 19, 2021 at NYJ
1	QB Ryan Fitzpatrick	Sept. 13, 2020 vs. Mia.
	QB Joe Flacco	Nov. 9, 2020 at NYJ
	QB Jimmy Garoppolo	Oct. 25, 2020 vs. S.F.
	QB Justin Herbert	Dec. 6, 2020 at LAC
	QB Lamar Jackson	Nov. 15, 2020 vs. Bal.
	QB Trevor Lawrence	Jan. 2, 2022 vs. Jax.
	QB Drew Lock	Oct. 18, 2020 vs. Den.
	QB Patrick Mahomes	Dec. 8, 2019 vs. K.C.
	QB Matt Ryan	Nov. 18, 2021 at Atl.
	QB Tua Tagovailoa	Dec. 20, 2020 at Mia.
	QB Mitchell Trubisky	Oct. 21, 2018 at Chi.
	QB Mike White	Oct. 24, 2021 vs. NYJ

OTHER PLAYER NOTES

ALL-STAR SLATER



In a stellar rookie season, **T Rashawn Slater** was recognized by fans, coaches and his peers as a 2022 Pro Bowl selection — and was tabbed as a starter for the AFC. He is the first rookie tackle to be named an all-star since Matt Kalil did so for the Vikings in the 2012 season.

Slater joined the Chargers' Marcus McNeill (2006) as the only tackles drafted outside of the top-10 to make the Pro Bowl as a rookie in NFL history.

ROOKIE TACKLES TO MAKE THE PRO BOWL, NFL HISTORY

Season	Team	Player	Rd. Drafted (Ovr. Pick)
2021	Chargers	Rashawn Slater	1st Round (13th Overall)
2012	Vikings	Matt Kalil	1st Round (4th Overall)
2008	Dolphins	Jake Long	1st Round (1st Overall)
2007	Browns	Joe Thomas	1st Round (3rd Overall)
2006	Chargers	Marcus McNeill	2nd Round (50th Overall)
1990	Dolphins	Richmond Webb	1st Round (9th Overall)

PALMER SCORES LATE

Rookie **WR Joshua Palmer** caught 33 passes for 353 yards (10.7 avg.) and four touchdowns in 2021. He caught 13 of those passes for 137 yards (10.5 avg.) and three scores in the fourth quarter, good for the second-most touchdown grabs by a rookie wide receiver in the fourth quarter in 2021.

The three touchdown receptions in the fourth quarter are the most by a Chargers rookie in the last 30 years.

FOURTH-QUARTER RECEIVING TOUCHDOWNS, ROOKIE WIDE RECEIVERS, 2021

Rank	Team	Player	Receiving TDs
1.	Cin.	Ja'Marr Chase	4
2.	LAC	Joshua Palmer	3
3.	Cle.	Anthony Schwartz	1
	Det.	Amon-Ra St. Brown	1
	Hou.	Nico Collins	1
	Mia.	Jaylen Waddle	1
	NYJ	Elijah Moore	1
	Phi.	DeVonta Smith	1

SAMUEL AMONG ROOKIE LEADERS

With his two early interceptions, **CB Asante Samuel Jr.**, tied for third among NFL rookies and tied for second among AFC rookies for interceptions. His two September interceptions tied for the most by a rookie in September over the last three seasons.

INTERCEPTIONS, ROOKIES, NFL, 2021

Rank	Team	Player	Interceptions
1.	Den.	CB Patrick Surtain II	4
2.	N.O.	CB Paulson Adebbo	3
3.	LAC	CB Asante Samuel Jr.	2
	—	Five Other Players	2

INTERCEPTIONS, ROOKIES, SINGLE SEPTEMBER, NFL, SINCE 2019

Rank	Season	Team	Player	Interceptions
1.	2021	LAC	CB Asante Samuel Jr.	2
	2020	K.C.	CB L'Jarius Sneed	2
	2019	NYG	LB Ryan Connelly	2
4.	—	—	Nine Other Players	1

CAMPBELL SCOOPS AND SCORES



CB Tevaughn Campbell scooped up a fumble of Bengals RB Joe Mixon that was forced by DL Christian Covington. Campbell returned the fumble for a 61-yard touchdown, tying for the sixth-longest fumble return by a single player in team history.

LONGEST FUMBLE RETURNS, SINGLE PLAYERS, CHARGERS HISTORY

Rk.	Game	Player	Play Length
1.	Nov. 30, 2008 vs. Atl.	S Eric Weddle	86-Yard TD
2.	Nov. 10, 2002 at StL	LB Donnie Edwards	82-Yard TD
3.	Oct. 22, 1989 vs. NYG	FS Vencie Glenn	81-Yard TD
4.	Oct. 29, 2006 vs. StL	S Marlon McCree	79-Yard TD
5.	Nov. 23, 1997 at S.F.	CB Paul Bradford	78-Yard TD
6.	Dec. 5, 2021 at Cin.	CB Tevaughn Campbell	61-Yard TD
	Sept. 25, 2016 at Ind.	DT Caraun Reid	61-Yard TD

2021 LOS ANGELES CHARGERS OFFENSIVE STATISTICS

Won 9, Lost 8

Date	W/L	Score	Opponent
9/12/2021	W	20 - 16	at Washington Football Team
9/19/2021	L	17 - 20	Dallas Cowboys
9/26/2021	W	30 - 24	at Kansas City Chiefs
10/4/2021	W	28 - 14	Las Vegas Raiders
10/10/2021	W	47 - 42	Cleveland Browns
10/17/2021	L	6 - 34	at Baltimore Ravens
10/31/2021	L	24 - 27	New England Patriots
11/7/2021	W	27 - 24	at Philadelphia Eagles
11/14/2021	L	20 - 27	Minnesota Vikings
11/21/2021	W	41 - 37	Pittsburgh Steelers
11/28/2021	L	13 - 28	at Denver Broncos
12/5/2021	W	41 - 22	at Cincinnati Bengals
12/12/2021	W	37 - 21	New York Giants
12/16/2021	L	28 - 34	Kansas City Chiefs
12/26/2021	L	29 - 41	at Houston Texans
1/2/2022	W	34 - 13	Denver Broncos
1/9/2022	L	32 - 35	at Las Vegas Raiders

Category	Los Angeles Chargers	Opponent
Total First Downs	401	383
Rushing	112	144
Passing	256	199
Penalty	33	40
3rd Down: Made/Att	100/221	107/216
3rd Down Pct.	45.2%	49.5%
4th Down: Made/Att	22/34	7/22
4th Down Pct.	64.7%	31.8%
Possession Avg.	29:11	30:49
Total Net Yards	6634	6122
Avg. Per Game	390.2	360.1
Total Plays	1128	1103
Avg. Per Play	5.9	5.6
Net Yards Rushing	1834	2361
Avg. Per Game	107.9	138.9
Total Rushes	423	509
Net Yards Passing	4800	3761
Avg. Per Game	282.4	221.2
Sacked/Yards Lost	31/214	35/231
Gross Yards	5014	3992
Attempts/Completions	674/443	559/357
Completion Pct.	65.7%	63.9%
Had Intercepted	15	11
Punts/Average	48/44.2	46/45.7
Net Punting Avg.	36.5	42.5
Penalties/Yards	116/1033	99/835
Fumbles/Ball Lost	10/7	23/10
Touchdowns	58	52
Rushing	18	22
Passing	38	27
Returns	2	3

Score By Periods		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	OT	Pts
Team		81	157	52	181	3	474
Opponents		75	115	84	173	12	459

Scoring		TD	Ru	Pa	Rt	PAT	FG	2Pt	Pts
A.Ekeler	20	12	8	0	0/0	0/0	2	124	
D.Hopkins	0	0	0	0	30/32	18/20	0	84	
M.Williams	9	0	9	0	0/0	0/0	1	56	
K.Allen	6	0	6	0	0/0	0/0	0	36	
J.Cook	4	0	4	0	0/0	0/0	2	28	
T.Vizcaino	0	0	0	0	10/15	6/7	0	28	
J.Palmer	4	0	4	0	0/0	0/0	0	24	
J.Herbert	3	3	0	0	0/0	0/0	1	20	
D.Parham	3	0	3	0	0/0	0/0	1	20	
J.Guyton	3	0	3	0	0/0	0/0	0	18	
J.Jackson	2	2	0	0	0/0	0/0	0	12	
T.Campbell	1	0	0	1	0/0	0/0	0	6	
A.Roberts	1	0	0	1	0/0	0/0	0	6	
S.Anderson	1	0	1	0	0/0	0/0	0	6	
L.Rountree	1	1	0	0	0/0	0/0	0	6	
Team	58	18	38	2	40/47	24/27	7	474	
Opponents	52	22	27	3	43/44	32/35	4	459	

2-Pt. Conversions: Team 7/11, Opponents: 4/7
 Sacks: J.Bosa 10.5, U.Nwosu 5.0, J.Tillery 4.5, K.Fackrell 3.0, J.Jones 3.0, D.James 2.0, D.Tranquill 1.5, L.Joseph 1.0, A.Ogbongbemiga 1.0, C.Covington 1.0, C.Rumph 1.0, K.White 1.0, N.Adderley 0.5 **Team: 35.0, Opponents: 31.0**

Rushing	No.	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
A.Ekeler	206	911	4.4	28	12
J.Jackson	68	364	5.4	75	2
J.Herbert	63	302	4.8	36	3
J.Kelley	33	102	3.1	14	0
L.Rountree	36	87	2.4	13	1
J.Guyton	7	34	4.9	21	0
A.Roberts	3	19	6.3	9	0
G.Nabers	3	8	2.7	4	0
J.Palmer	1	6	6.0	6	0
M.Ffrench	1	3	3.0	3	0
C.Daniel	2	-2	-1.0	-1	0
Team	423	1834	4.3	75	18
Opponents	509	2361	4.6	52t	22

Receiving	No.	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
K.Allen	106	1138	10.7	42	6
M.Williams	76	1146	15.1	72t	9
A.Ekeler	70	647	9.2	40	8
J.Cook	48	564	11.8	42	4
J.Palmer	33	353	10.7	36	4
J.Guyton	31	448	14.5	59t	3
J.Jackson	22	178	8.1	25	0
D.Parham	20	190	9.5	22t	3
S.Anderson	16	165	10.3	34	1
T.McKitty	6	45	7.5	12	0
J.Kelley	5	38	7.6	17	0
J.Moore	3	56	18.7	24	0
K.Hill	3	30	10.0	19	0
G.Nabers	3	17	5.7	8	0
L.Rountree	1	-1	-1.0	0	0
J.Herbert	0	0	0.0	0	0
D.Bradwell	0	0	0.0	0	0
T.Campbell	0	0	0.0	0	0
Team	443	5014	11.3	72t	38
Opponents	357	3992	11.2	71t	27

Interceptions	No.	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
A.Samuel	2	26	13.0	26	0
K.White	2	22	11.0	22	0
D.James	2	20	10.0	15	0
U.Nwosu	1	2	2.0	2	0
N.Niemann	1	0	0.0	0	0
A.Gilman	1	0	0.0	0	0
C.Harris	1	0	0.0	0	0
M.Davis	1	0	0.0	0	0
Team	11	70	6.4	26	0
Opponents	15	167	11.1	70t	3

Punting	No	Yds	Avg	Net	TB	In	Lg	B
T.Long	46	2091	45.5	36.8	2	11	69	1
T.Vizcaino	1	32	32.0	26.0	0	1	32	0
Team	48	2123	44.2	36.5	2	12	69	1
Opponents	46	2104	45.7	42.5	2	17	63	0

Punt Returns	Ret	FC	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
A.Roberts	12	9	66	5.5	15	0
K.Hill	6	3	41	6.8	12	0
J.Guyton	0	1	0	0.0	0	0
M.Ffrench	0	1	0	0.0	0	0
Team	18	14	107	5.9	15	0
Opponents	30	5	329	11.0	45	0

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
A.Roberts	19	624	32.8	101	1
L.Rountree	7	117	16.7	24	0
M.Bandy	4	88	22.0	27	0
K.Hill	3	50	16.7	18	0
N.Adderley	3	48	16.0	19	0
J.Guyton	2	32	16.0	22	0
M.Ffrench	1	17	17.0	17	0
Team	39	976	25.0	101t	1
Opponents	36	748	20.8	47	0

Field Goals	1-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
D.Hopkins	1/1	5/5	4/4	7/7	1/3
T.Vizcaino	0/0	3/3	2/2	1/2	0/0
Team	1/1	8/8	6/6	8/9	1/3
Opponents	0/0	5/5	13/13	9/9	5/8

Fumbles Lost: A.Ekeler 3, J.Jackson 1, J.Herbert 1, J.Kelley 1, A.Roberts 1 **Total: 7**
 Opponent Fumble Recoveries: J.Jones 2, M.Davis 2, U.Nwosu 1, K.Fackrell 1, T.Campbell 1, D.Tranquill 1, K.Hill 1, N.Adderley 1 **Total: 10**

Passing	Att	Cmp	Yds	Cmp%	Yds/Att	TD	TD%	Int	Int%	Long	Sack	Lost	Rating
J.Herbert	672	443	5014	65.9%	7.5	38	5.7%	15	2.2%	72t	31/	214	97.7
K.Allen	1	0	0	0.0%	0.0	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0/	0	39.6
T.Long	1	0	0	0.0%	0.0	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0/	0	39.6
Team	674	443	5014	65.7%	7.4	38	5.6%	15	2.2%	72t	31/	214	97.4
Opponents	559	357	3992	63.9%	7.1	27	4.8%	11	2.0%	71t	35/	231	93.0

2021 LOS ANGELES CHARGERS DEFENSIVE STATISTICS

Official Press Box Totals – Confirmed by league review.

Player	– Tackles –					– Fumbles –					
	Solo	Assisted	Total	Sacks	Yards	Tackles for Loss	QB Hits	Interceptions	Passes Def.	Forced	Recoveries
Kyzir White	90	54	144	1	1	7	4	2	3	1	0
Derwin James Jr.	75	43	118	2	12.5	7	7	2	5	3	0
Nasir Adderley	67	30	97	0.5	3.5	3	2	0	5	1	1
Drue Tranquill	42	28	70	1.5	14	5	3	0	1	0	1
Linval Joseph.	30	27	57	1	10	3	2	0	0	0	0
Michael Davis.	42	12	54	0	0	1	0	1	12	1	2
Christian Covington . . .	30	22	52	1	6	3	1	0	0	1	0
Joey Bosa.	36	15	51	10.5	70	5	20	0	0	7	0
Jerry Tillery	24	27	51	4.5	38	6	14	0	0	0	0
Asante Samuel Jr.	33	10	43	0	0	1	0	2	11	0	0
Uchenna Nwosu	24	16	40	5	36	8	16	1	4	2	1
Tevaughn Campbell . . .	30	8	38	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	1
Justin Jones.	19	18	37	3	9	5	5	0	1	0	2
Chris Harris Jr.	30	7	37	0	0	0	1	1	6	0	0
Alohi Gilman	26	10	36	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Kenneth Murray Jr. . . .	17	14	31	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1
Amen Ogbongbemiga . . .	13	8	21	1	9	1	2	0	0	0	0
Trey Marshall	5	12	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kyler Fackrell.	11	5	16	3	17	4	4	0	1	1	0
Chris Rumph II.	7	7	14	1	5	2	3	0	0	0	0
Breiden Fehoko.	5	8	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Joe Gaziano.	8	5	13	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	0
Nick Niemann	5	3	8	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Davontae Harris	5	1	6	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Forrest Merrill	2	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Emeke Egbule	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Ryan Smith.	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mark Webb Jr.	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Eric Banks	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Essang Bassey.	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Andrew Brown.	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kemon Hall	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Totals.	683	395	1,078	35	231	64	89	11	56	19	9
<i>Defensive Backs</i>	<i>318</i>	<i>134</i>	<i>452</i>	<i>2.5</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Linebackers</i>	<i>167</i>	<i>107</i>	<i>274</i>	<i>3.5</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Outside Linebackers. . .</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>125</i>	<i>19.5</i>	<i>128</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Defensive Line.</i>	<i>118</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>227</i>	<i>9.5</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>

SPECIAL TEAMS TACKLES

Player	Total Tackles
Nick Niemann	14
Alohi Gilman	6
Kemon Hall	6
Justin Jackson	6
Chris Rumph II	5
Drue Tranquill.	5
Amen Ogbongbemiga.	5
Stephen Anderson	4
Ryan Smith	3
Tevaughn Campbell.	2
Dustin Hopkins	2
Gabe Nabers.	2
Matt Overton	2
Larry Rountree III.	2
Nasir Adderley	1
Cole Christiansen.	1
Kyler Fackrell	1
Matt Feiler.	1
Maurice Ffrench	1
Davontae Harris	1
Trey Marshall.	1
Tre' McKitty.	1
Kiondre Thomas.	1
Tristan Vizcaino	1
Mark Webb Jr.	1
Totals.	67

2021 GAME SUMMARIES

WEEK 1 AT WASHINGTON



CHARGERS 20 WASHINGTON 16

Sunday, Sept. 12, 2021
FedExField – Landover, Md.



WEEK 2 vs. DALLAS



COWBOYS 20 CHARGERS 17

Sunday, Sept. 19, 2021
SoFi Stadium – Inglewood, Calif.



GAME STATISTICS

TEAM	1	2	3	4	OT	F
L.A. Chargers	7	6	0	7	—	20
Washington	3	6	7	0	—	16

SCORING SUMMARY

Team	Q	Time	Play
Chargers	1	9:14	A.Ekeler 3 yd. run (T.Vizcaino kick) (10-75, 5:46)
WFT	1	2:57	D.Hopkins 30 yd. Field Goal (6-36, 3:07)
WFT	2	13:36	D.Hopkins 43 yd. Field Goal (7-46, 2:49)
Chargers	2	9:06	T.Vizcaino 33 yd. Field Goal (10-76, 4:30)
Chargers	2	0:45	T.Vizcaino 27 yd. Field Goal (18-65, 7:52)
WFT	2	0:00	D.Hopkins 48 yd. Field Goal (5-45, 0:45)
WFT	3	11:20	L.Thomas 11 yd. pass from T.Heinicke (D.Hopkins kick) (8-81, 3:40)
Chargers	4	11:21	M.Williams 3 yd. pass from J.Herbert (T.Vizcaino kick) (3-3, 0:45)

TEAM STATISTICS

	LAC	WAS
FIRST DOWNS:	27	15
TOTAL NET YARDS:	424	259
NET RUSHING YARDS:	90	126
NET PASSING YARDS:	334	133
PENALTIES/YARDS:	6-94	8-57
3RD DOWN EFFICIENCY (%):	14-19 (73.7%)	3-10 (30.0%)
SCORING DRIVES (%):	4-9 (44.4%)	4-9 (44.4%)
PUNTS/NET AVERAGE:	2-36.0	3-45.0
SACKS/YARDS:	1/2	2/3
FUMBLES/LOST:	2/1	3/1
POINTS OFF TURNOVERS:	7	0
AVG. DRIVE START:	OWN 30	OWN 26
TIME OF POSSESSION:	36:03	23:57

INDIVIDUAL TOP PERFORMERS



PASSING

	CMP	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	RT
J.Herbert	31	47	337	1	1	85.2
T.Heinicke	11	15	122	1	0	119.3
R.Fitzpatrick	3	6	13	0	0	56.2

RUSHING

	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
A.Ekeler	15	57	3.8	14	1
L.Rountree III	8	27	3.4	13	0
A.Gibson	20	90	4.5	27	0
T.Heinicke	3	17	5.7	9	0

RECEIVING

	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
K.Allen	9	100	11.1	17	0
M.Williams	8	82	10.3	20	1
J.Cook	5	56	11.2	23	0
J.Guyton	3	49	16.3	22	0
T.McLaurin	4	62	15.5	34	0
L.Thomas	3	30	10.0	12	1
A.Gibson	3	18	6.0	11	0
A.Humphries	2	10	5.0	6	0

TACKLES (SOLO) - LAC: K.Murray Jr. 10 (6), D.James Jr. 7 (6), Samuel 5 (4);
WAS: C.Holcomb 11 (8), B.McCain 10 (7), J.Bostic 8 (5).

SACKS - LAC: J.Bosa 1-2; **WAS:** J.Allen 1-3, M.Sweat 1-0.

INTERCEPTIONS - LAC: None; **WAS:** W.Jackson III 1-0-0.

STARTERS

WR.....K.Allen	DL.....J.Tillery	WR.....T.McLaurin	DE.....C.Young
LT.....R.Slater	DL.....L.Joseph	LT.....C.Leno	DT.....J.Allen
LG.....O.Aboushi	DL.....J.Jones	LG.....E.Flowers	DT.....D.Payne
C.....C.Linsley	OLB.....J.Bosa	C.....C.Roullier	DE.....M.Sweat
RG.....M.Feiler	LB.....K.Murray Jr.	RG.....B.Scherff	LB.....C.Holcomb
RT.....B.Bulaga	LB.....K.White	RT.....S.Cosmi	LB.....J.Bostic
TE.....J.Cook	CB.....M.Davis	TE.....L.Thomas	CB.....W.Jackson
WR.....M.Williams	CB.....A.Samuel Jr.	WR.....A.Humphries	CB.....W.Fuller
WR.....J.Guyton	CB.....C.Harris Jr.	WR.....D.Brown	S.....L.Collins
QB.....J.Herbert	S.....D.James Jr.	QB.....R.Fitzpatrick	S.....K.Curl
RB.....A.Ekeler	S.....N.Adderley	RB.....A.Gibson	CB.....B.McCain

GAME STATISTICS

TEAM	1	2	3	4	OT	F
Dallas	14	0	0	6	—	20
L.A. Chargers	3	8	3	3	—	17

SCORING SUMMARY

Team	Q	Time	Play
Cowboys	1	8:09	T.Pollard 4 yd. run (G.Zuerlein kick) (15-78, 6:51)
Chargers	1	3:32	T.Vizcaino 46 yd. Field Goal (5-17, 2:24)
Cowboys	1	0:17	E.Elliott 5 yd. run (G.Zuerlein kick) (7-75, 3:15)
Chargers	2	9:49	M.Williams 12 yd. pass from J.Herbert (A.Ekeler run) (10-75, 5:28)
Chargers	3	9:22	T.Vizcaino 32 yd. Field Goal (13-61, 5:38)
Cowboys	4	10:25	G.Zuerlein 34 yd. Field Goal (10-64, 4:40)
Chargers	4	3:54	T.Vizcaino 29 yd. Field Goal (12-64, 6:31)
Cowboys	4	0:00	G.Zuerlein 56 yd. Field Goal (11-49, 3:54)

TEAM STATISTICS

	DAL	LAC
FIRST DOWNS:	25	24
TOTAL NET YARDS:	419	408
NET RUSHING YARDS:	198	95
NET PASSING YARDS:	221	313
PENALTIES/YARDS:	8-76	12-99
3RD DOWN EFFICIENCY (%):	6-10 (60.0%)	5-12 (41.7%)
SCORING DRIVES (%):	4-8 (50.0%)	4-7 (57.1%)
PUNTS/NET AVERAGE:	1-44.0	0-0.0
SACKS/YARDS:	2/25	2/16
FUMBLES/LOST:	1/0	0/0
POINTS OFF TURNOVERS:	3	3
AVG. DRIVE START:	OWN 25	OWN 29
TIME OF POSSESSION:	29:03	30:57

INDIVIDUAL TOP PERFORMERS



PASSING

	CMP	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	RT
J.Herbert	31	41	338	1	2	87.2
D.Prescott	23	27	237	0	1	87.8

RUSHING

	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
A.Ekeler	9	54	6.0	20	0
J.Jackson	4	21	5.3	7	0
T.Pollard	13	109	8.4	28	1
E.Elliott	16	71	4.4	19	1

RECEIVING

	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
K.Allen	4	108	27.0	42	0
M.Williams	7	91	13.0	27	1
A.Ekeler	9	61	6.8	20	0
J.Cook	3	28	9.3	12	0
C.Lamb	8	81	10.1	34	0
T.Pollard	3	37	12.3	20	0
B.Jarwin	3	31	10.3	13	0
E.Elliott	2	26	13.0	14	0

TACKLES (SOLO) - LAC: N.Adderley 9 (8), D.James Jr. 7 (5), Murray Jr. 7 (5);
DAL: J.Smith 9 (6), L. Vander Esch 7 (4), T.Diggs 6 (6).

SACKS - LAC: K.Fackrell 1-6, James Jr. 0.5-5, Tillery 0.5-5; **DAL:** M.Parsons 1-18, L.Vander Esch 1-7.

INTERCEPTIONS - LAC: Samuel Jr. 1-26-0; **DAL:** T.Diggs 1-0-0, D.Kazee 1-0-0.

STARTERS

WR.....K.Allen	OLB.....U.Nwosu	WR.....A.Cooper	RDE.....D.Armstrong
LT.....R.Slater	DL.....C.Covington	LT.....T.Smith	RDT.....C.Watkins
LG.....M.Feiler	DL.....L.Joseph	LG.....C.Williams	LDT.....O.Odighizuwa
C.....C.Linsley	DL.....J.Tillery	C.....T.Biadasz	OLB.....M.Parsons
RG.....O.Aboushi	OLB.....J.Bosa	RG.....Z.Martin	MLB.....J.Smith
RT.....S.Norton	LB.....K.Murray Jr.	RT.....T.Steele	OLB.....L.Vander Esch
TE.....J.Cook	CB.....K.White	TE.....B.Jarwin	RLB.....T.Diggs
WR.....D.Parham	LB.....M.Davis	TE.....D.Schultz	LCB.....A.Brown
WR.....M.Williams	CB.....A.Samuel Jr.	WR.....C.Lamb	FS.....D.Kazee
QB.....J.Herbert	S.....D.James Jr.	QB.....D.Prescott	S.....M.Hooker
RB.....A.Ekeler	S.....N.Adderley	RB.....E.Elliott	S.....J.Kearse

2021 GAME SUMMARIES

WEEK 3 AT KANSAS CITY

WEEK 4 vs. LAS VEGAS



CHARGERS 30 CHIEFS 24

Sunday, Sept. 26, 2021

GEHA Field at Arrowhead Stadium — Kansas City, Mo.



CHARGERS 28 RAIDERS 14

Monday, Oct. 4, 2021

SoFi Stadium — Inglewood, Calif.



GAME STATISTICS

TEAM	1	2	3	4	OT	F
L.A. Chargers	0	14	0	16	—	30
Kansas City	0	3	14	7	—	24

SCORING SUMMARY

Team	Q	Time	Play
Chargers	2	13:57	K.Allen 4 yd. pass from J.Herbert (kick failed, wl) (9-51, 3:51)
Chargers	2	7:36	A.Ekeler 16 yd. pass from J.Herbert (J.Herbert-M.Williams pass) (6-53, 3:19)
Chiefs	2	0:19	H.Butker 34 yd. Field Goal (11-70, 2:14)
Chiefs	3	9:15	J.Fortson 2 yd. pass from P.Mahomes (H.Butker kick) (12-75, 5:45)
Chiefs	3	3:35	C.Edwards-Helaire 10 yd. pass from P.Mahomes (H.Butker kick) (10-70, 4:09)
Chargers	4	13:39	M.Williams 20 yd. pass from J.Herbert (T.Vizcaino kick) (11-75, 4:56)
Chiefs	4	6:43	M.Hardman 8 yd. pass from P.Mahomes (H.Butker kick) (12-72, 6:56)
Chargers	4	2:14	T.Vizcaino 24 yd. Field Goal (10-69, 4:29)
Chargers	4	0:32	M.Williams 4 yd. pass from J.Herbert (kick failed, wl) (8-59, 1:10)

TEAM STATISTICS

	LAC	KC
FIRST DOWNS:	27	15
TOTAL NET YARDS:	352	437
NET RUSHING YARDS:	77	186
NET PASSING YARDS:	275	251
PENALTIES/YARDS:	6-56	8-50
3RD DOWN EFFICIENCY (%):	4-11 (36.4%)	6-10 (60.0%)
SCORING DRIVES (%):	5-10 (50.0%)	4-10 (40.0%)
PUNTS/NET AVERAGE:	4-43.0	1-51.0
SACKS/YARDS:	2/9	1/2
FUMBLES/LOST:	0/0	2/2
POINTS OFF TURNOVERS:	21	0
AVG. DRIVE START:	OWN 28	OWN 34
TIME OF POSSESSION:	27:29	32:31

INDIVIDUAL TOP PERFORMERS



PASSING

	CMP	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	RT
J.Herbert	26	38	281	4	0	125.0
P.Mahomes	27	44	260	3	2	81.6

RUSHING

	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
A.Ekeler	11	55	5.0	11	0
J.Herbert	4	16	4.0	9	0
C.Edwards-Helaire	17	100	5.9	14	0
P.Mahomes	4	45	11.3	21	0

RECEIVING

	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
M.Williams	7	122	17.4	43	2
A.Ekeler	6	52	8.7	16	1
K.Allen	8	50	6.3	15	1
J.Cook	2	27	13.5	21	0
T.Kelce	7	104	14.9	28	0
T.Hill	5	56	11.2	18	0
M.Hardman	3	33	11.0	15	1
D.Robinson	2	17	8.5	11	0

TACKLES (SOLO) - LAC: N.Adderley 9 (7), D.Tranquill 8 (6), K.White 8 (5); **KC:** D.Sorensen 7 (5), N.Bolton 7 (3), L.Sneed 6 (5).

SACKS - LAC: K.White 1-1, J.Bosa 0.5-4, D.Tranquill 0.5-4; **KC:** M.Danna 1-6.

INTERCEPTIONS - LAC: A.Samuel 1-0-0, A.Gilman 1-0-0; **KC:** None.

STARTERS

WR.....K.Allen	OLB.....J.Bosa	WR.....T.Hill	LDE.....C.Jones
LT.....R.Slater	DL.....J.Tillery	LT.....O.Brown	LDT.....J.Reed
LG.....M.Feiler	DL.....L.Joseph	LG.....J.Thuney	RDT.....D.Nnadi
C.....C.Linsley	OLB.....U.Nwosu	C.....C.Humphrey	RDE.....M.Danna
RG.....O.Aboushi	LB.....K.Murray Jr.	RG.....T.Smith	LB.....N.Bolton
RT.....S.Norton	LB.....K.White	RT.....L.Niang	LB.....A.Hitchens
TE.....J.Cook	CB.....M.Davis	TE.....T.Kelce	LB.....N.Bolton
TE.....D.Parham	CB.....T.Campbell	WR.....M.Hardman	LCB.....R.Fenton
TE.....S.Anderson	S.....N.Adderley	WR.....D.Robinson	RCB.....L.Sneed
QB.....J.Herbert	S.....D.James Jr.	QB.....P.Mahomes	S.....D.Sorensen
RB.....A.Ekeler	CB.....A.Samuel Jr.	RB.....C.Edwards-Helaire	S.....T.Mathieu

GAME STATISTICS

TEAM	1	2	3	4	OT	F
Las Vegas	0	0	14	0	—	14
L.A. Chargers	7	14	0	7	—	28

SCORING SUMMARY

Team	Q	Time	Play
Chargers	1	8:01	D.Parham 4 yd. pass from J.Herbert (T.Vizcaino kick) (12-75, 6:59)
Chargers	2	4:16	J.Cook 10 yd. pass from J.Herbert (T.Vizcaino kick) (6-80, 3:35)
Chargers	2	0:29	A.Ekeler 14 yd. pass from J.Herbert (T.Vizcaino kick) (9-69, 2:15)
Raiders	3	9:01	H.Renfrow 10 yd. pass from D.Carr (D.Carlson kick) (11-78, 5:59)
Raiders	3	1:44	D.Waller 3 yd. pass from D.Carr (D.Carlson kick) (6-81, 2:55)
Chargers	4	5:20	A.Ekeler 11 yd. run (T.Vizcaino kick) (10-58, 5:18)

TEAM STATISTICS

	LV	LAC
FIRST DOWNS:	13	25
TOTAL NET YARDS:	213	380
NET RUSHING YARDS:	48	168
NET PASSING YARDS:	165	212
PENALTIES/YARDS:	7-58	7-105
3RD DOWN EFFICIENCY (%):	4-13 (30.8%)	4-13 (30.8%)
SCORING DRIVES (%):	2-12 (16.7%)	4-12 (33.3%)
PUNTS/NET AVERAGE:	5-51.2	6-42.2
SACKS/YARDS:	2/10	4/31
FUMBLES/LOST:	2/0	0/0
POINTS OFF TURNOVERS:	0	0
AVG. DRIVE START:	OWN 24	OWN 34
TIME OF POSSESSION:	25:18	34:42

INDIVIDUAL TOP PERFORMERS



PASSING

	CMP	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	RT
J.Herbert	25	38	222	3	0	107.6
D.Carr	21	34	196	2	1	84.9
T.Long	0	1	0	0	0	39.6

RUSHING

	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
A.Ekeler	15	117	7.8	20	0
L.Rountree III	11	31	2.8	9	0
J.Jacobs	13	40	3.1	10	0
D.Carr	3	6	2.0	3	0

RECEIVING

	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
J.Cook	6	70	11.7	22	1
K.Allen	7	36	5.1	9	0
S.Anderson	1	34	34.0	34	0
A.Ekeler	3	28	9.3	14	1
H.Ruggs III	3	60	20.0	51	0
D.Waller	4	50	12.5	21	1
H.Renfrow	6	45	7.5	12	1
J.Jacobs	5	17	3.4	9	0

TACKLES (SOLO) - LAC: D.James Jr. 6 (3), M.Davis 5 (4), D.Tranquill 5 (3); **LV:** C.Littleton 12 (8), D.Perryman 12 (8), J.Abram 8 (4).

SACKS - LAC: J.Bosa 1-12, C.Covington 1-6, K.Fackrell 1-3, J.Tillery 1-10; **LV:** D.Philon 2-10.

INTERCEPTIONS - LAC: James Jr. 1-15-0; **LV:** None.

STARTERS

WR.....K.Allen	OLB.....J.Bosa	WR.....H.Ruggs III	DE.....M.Crosby
LT.....R.Slater	DL.....J.Tillery	LT.....K.Miller	DT.....Q.Jefferson
LG.....M.Feiler	DL.....L.Joseph	LG.....J.Simpson	NT.....J.Hankins
C.....C.Linsley	OLB.....U.Nwosu	C.....A.James	DE.....Y.Ngakoue
RG.....O.Aboushi	LB.....D.Tranquill	RG.....J.Elumunor	MLB..D.Perryman
RT.....S.Norton	LB.....K.White	RT.....A.Leatherwood	RCB..C.Hayward Jr.
TE.....J.Cook	CB.....M.Davis	TE.....D.Waller	LCB.....T.Mullen
TE.....D.Parham	CB.....A.Gilman	WR.....B.Edwards	RCB.....N.Hobbs
TE.....S.Anderson	S.....N.Adderley	WR.....H.Renfrow	CB.....N.Hobbs
QB.....J.Herbert	S.....D.James Jr.	QB.....D.Carr	FS.....T.Moehrig
RB.....A.Ekeler	CB.....A.Samuel Jr.	RB.....J.Jacobs	SS.....J.Abram

2021 GAME SUMMARIES

WEEK 5 vs. CLEVELAND



CHARGERS 47 BROWNS 42

Sunday, Oct. 10, 2021
SoFi Stadium — Inglewood, Calif.



GAME STATISTICS

TEAM	1	2	3	4	OT	F
Cleveland	3	17	14	15	—	42
L.A. Chargers	7	6	8	26	—	47

SCORING SUMMARY

Team	Q	Time	Play
Browns	1	7:39	C.McLaughlin 35 yd. Field Goal (10-75, 6:32)
Chargers	1	2:44	D.Parham 22 yd. pass from J.Herbert (T.Vizcaino kick) (10-85, 4:55)
Browns	2	12:46	R.Higgins 7 yd. pass from B.Mayfield (C.McLaughlin kick) (8-72, 4:58)
Chargers	2	11:43	M.Williams 72 yd. pass from J.Herbert (kick failed, wl) (4-82, 1:03)
Browns	2	0:54	K.Hunt 3 yd. run (C.McLaughlin kick) (11-53, 6:00)
Browns	2	0:00	C.McLaughlin 31 yd. Field Goal (4-9, 0:38)
Browns	3	12:18	N.Chubb 52 yd. run (C.McLaughlin kick) (5-75, 2:42)
Chargers	3	6:25	J.Herbert 9 yd. run (J.Herbert-D.Parham pass) (14-84, 5:53)
Chargers	4	11:22	M.Williams 42 yd. pass from J.Herbert (T.Vizcaino kick) (4-61, 1:29)
Browns	4	10:40	D.Njoku 71 yd. pass from B.Mayfield (B.Mayfield-A.Hooper pass) (2-78, 0:42)
Chargers	4	7:24	A.Ekeler 4 yd. run (T.Vizcaino kick) (11-75, 3:16)
Browns	4	4:45	K.Hunt 8 yd. run (C.McLaughlin kick) (5-75, 2:39)
Chargers	4	3:15	A.Ekeler 19 yd. pass from J.Herbert (kick failed, wl) (6-75, 1:30)
Chargers	4	1:31	A.Ekeler 3 yd. run (run failed) (5-48, 0:31)

TEAM STATISTICS

	CLE	LAC
FIRST DOWNS:	25	27
TOTAL NET YARDS:	531	493
NET RUSHING YARDS:	230	112
NET PASSING YARDS:	301	381
PENALTIES/YARDS:	7-77	6-49
3RD DOWN EFFICIENCY (%):	4-12 (33.3%)	6-13 (46.2%)
SCORING DRIVES (%):	7-12 (58.3%)	7-12 (58.3%)
PUNTS/NET AVERAGE:	3-44.7	3-53.0
SACKS/YARDS:	2/0	1/4
FUMBLES/LOST:	1/0	2/1
POINTS OFF TURNOVERS:	3	0
AVG. DRIVE START:	OWN 29	OWN 27
TIME OF POSSESSION:	36:28	23:32

INDIVIDUAL TOP PERFORMERS



PASSING

	CMP	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	RT
J.Herbert	26	43	398	4	0	122.0
B.Mayfield	23	32	305	2	0	122.5

RUSHING

	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
A.Ekeler	17	66	3.9	9	2
J.Herbert	4	29	7.3	11	1
N.Chubb	21	161	7.7	52	1
K.Hunt	12	61	5.1	12	2

RECEIVING

	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
M.Williams	8	165	20.6	72	2
K.Allen	6	75	12.5	37	0
A.Ekeler	5	53	10.6	19	1
J.Guyton	2	35	17.5	21	0
D.Njoku	7	149	21.3	71	1
D.Peoples-Jones	5	70	14.0	42	0
R.Higgins	3	29	9.7	16	1
K.Hunt	5	28	5.6	13	0

TACKLES (SOLO) - LAC: D.James 17 (9), D.Tranquill 10 (6), N.Adderley 8 (7);
CLE: G.Williams 10 (7), A.Walker 6 (2), A.Green 5 (4).

SACKS - LAC: D.James 1-4; **CLE:** M.McDowell 1-10, M.Garrett 1-7.

INTERCEPTIONS - LAC: None; **CLE:** None.

STARTERS

WR.....K.Allen	OLB.....J.Bosa	WR.....O.Beckham	DE.....M.Garrett
LT.....R.Slater	DL.....J.Tillery	LT.....B.Hance	DT.....M.Jackson
LG.....M.Feiler	DL.....L.Joseph	LG.....J.Bitonio	DT.....M.McDowell
C.....C.Linsley	DL.....C.Covington	C.....J.Tretter	DE.....T.McKinley
RG.....O.Aboushi	OLB.....U.Nwosu	RG.....W.Teller	LB.....J.Owusu-Koramoah
RT.....S.Norton	LB.....K.White	RT.....J.Conklin	LB.....A.Walker
TE.....J.Cook	LB.....D.Tranquill	TE.....D.Njoku	CB.....D.Ward
TE.....D.Parham	CB.....M.Davis	TE.....A.Hooper	CB.....G.Williams
WR.....M.Williams	S.....N.Adderley	TE.....H.Bryant	CB.....T.Hill
QB.....J.Herbert	S.....D.James Jr.	QB.....B.Mayfield	S.....R.Harrison
RB.....A.Ekeler	CB.....A.Samuel Jr.	RB.....N.Chubb	S.....J.Johnson

WEEK 6 AT BALTIMORE



RAVENS 34 CHARGERS 6

Sunday, Oct. 17, 2021
M&T Bank Stadium — Baltimore, Md.



GAME STATISTICS

TEAM	1	2	3	4	OT	F
L.A. Chargers	7	6	0	0	—	6
Baltimore	7	10	10	7	—	34

SCORING SUMMARY

Team	Q	Time	Play
Ravens	1	5:12	L.Murray 14 yd. run (J.Tucker kick) (12-90, 6:39)
Ravens	2	13:24	L.Bell 2 yd. run (J.Tucker kick) (8-74, 4:55)
Ravens	2	7:03	J.Tucker 52 yd. Field Goal (4-5, 2:06)
Chargers	2	4:04	J.Cook 1 yd. pass from J.Herbert (kick failed, wr) (2-27, 0:16)
Ravens	3	7:39	M.Andrews 9 yd. pass from L.Jackson (J.Tucker kick) (12-52, 7:21)
Ravens	3	5:02	J.Tucker 39 yd. Field Goal (4-[-3], 0:53)
Ravens	4	14:55	D.Freeman 9 yd. run (J.Tucker kick) (9-65, 4:45)

TEAM STATISTICS

	LAC	BAL
FIRST DOWNS:	14	27
TOTAL NET YARDS:	208	327
NET RUSHING YARDS:	26	87
NET PASSING YARDS:	182	140
PENALTIES/YARDS:	4-35	2-15
3RD DOWN EFFICIENCY (%):	3-12 (25.0%)	6-11 (54.5%)
SCORING DRIVES (%):	1-11 (0.9%)	6-11 (54.5%)
PUNTS/NET AVERAGE:	5-52.4	2-43.0
SACKS/YARDS:	3/27	2/13
FUMBLES/LOST:	0/0	2/0
POINTS OFF TURNOVERS:	6	0
AVG. DRIVE START:	OWN 29	OWN 37
TIME OF POSSESSION:	21:53	38:07

INDIVIDUAL TOP PERFORMERS



PASSING

	CMP	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	RT
J.Herbert	22	39	195	1	1	67.8
L.Jackson	19	27	167	1	2	68.0

RUSHING

	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
J.Herbert	2	12	6.0	10	0
A.Ekeler	6	7	1.2	5	0
D.Freeman	5	53	8.8	16	1
L.Jackson	8	51	6.4	22	0

RECEIVING

	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
K.Allen	5	50	10.0	21	0
A.Ekeler	4	48	12.0	18	0
M.Williams	2	27	13.5	26	0
J.Cook	4	25	6.3	11	1
M.Andrews	5	68	13.6	21	1
M.Brown	4	35	8.8	20	0
R.Bateman	4	29	7.3	11	0
D.Duvernay	2	15	7.5	8	0

TACKLES (SOLO) - LAC: D.James 8 (7), K.White 8 (5), A.Ogbongbemiga 8 (5);
BAL: A.Averett 6 (5), J.Bynes 6 (3), C.Clark 5 (3).

SACKS - LAC: L.Joseph 1-10, J.Bosa, 1-9, U.Nwosu 1-8; **BAL:** J.Houston 1-7, D.Elliott 1-6.

INTERCEPTIONS - LAC: K.White 2-22-0; **BAL:** D.Elliott 1-0-0.

STARTERS

WR.....K.Allen	OLB.....J.Bosa	WR.....M.Brown	DT.....J.Madubuike
LT.....R.Slater	DL.....L.Joseph	LT.....C.Leno	NT.....B.Williams
LG.....M.Feiler	DL.....J.Tillery	LG.....A.Villanueva	DE.....C.Campbell
C.....C.Linsley	OLB.....U.Nwosu	C.....B.Bozeman	RUSH.....J.Houston
RG.....M.Schofield III	OLB.....K.Fackrell	WR.....K.Zeitler	WLB.....P.Queen
RT.....S.Norton	LB.....A.Ogbongbemiga	RT.....P.Mekari	MLB.....J.Bynes
TE.....D.Parham	LB.....K.White	TE.....E.Tomlinson	SAM.....T.Bowser
WR.....M.Williams	CB.....M.Davis	WR.....D.Duvernay	CB.....A.Averett
FB.....G.Nabers	CB.....A.Samuel Jr.	FB.....P.Ricard	SS.....C.Clark
QB.....J.Herbert	CB.....C.Harris Jr.	QB.....L.Jackson	FS.....D.Elliott
RB.....A.Ekeler	S.....D.James Jr.	RB.....L.Murray	CB.....M.Humphrey

2021 GAME SUMMARIES

WEEK 8 vs. NEW ENGLAND

WEEK 9 AT PHILDELPHIA



**PATRIOTS 27
CHARGERS 24**

Sunday, Oct. 31, 2021
SoFi Stadium – Inglewood, Calif.



**CHARGERS 27
EAGLES 24**

Sunday, Nov. 7, 2021
Lincoln Financial Field – Philadelphia, Pa.



GAME STATISTICS

TEAM	1	2	3	4	OT	F
New England	7	6	3	11	—	27
L.A. Chargers	7	7	3	7	—	24

SCORING SUMMARY

Team	Q	Time	Play
Chargers	1	10:54	A.Ekeler 5 yd. run (D.Hopkins kick) (8-75, 4:06)
Patriots	1	6:26	D.Harris 1 yd. run (N.Folk kick) (10-75, 4:28)
Chargers	2	12:35	K.Allen 5 yd. pass from J.Herbert (D.Hopkins kick) (5-86, 2:16)
Patriots	2	3:29	N.Folk 24 yd. Field Goal (9-30, 3:22)
Patriots	2	0:10	N.Folk 48 yd. Field Goal (5-10, 0:47)
Patriots	3	3:39	N.Folk 48 yd. Field Goal (10-31, 5:09)
Chargers	3	0:39	D.Hopkins 48 yd. Field Goal (6-45, 3:00)
Patriots	4	10:11	A.Phillips 26 yd. INT return (Jones-Meyers pass)
Patriots	4	2:19	N.Folk 30 yd. Field Goal (14-54, 6:56)
Chargers	4	0:40	J.Palmer 24 yd. pass from J.Herbert (D.Hopkins kick) (10-72, 1:39)

TEAM STATISTICS

	NE	LAC
FIRST DOWNS:	21	17
TOTAL NET YARDS:	352	369
NET RUSHING YARDS:	141	163
NET PASSING YARDS:	211	206
PENALTIES/YARDS:	4-30	5-40
3RD DOWN EFFICIENCY (%):	9-19 (47.4%)	4-12 (33.3%)
SCORING DRIVES (%):	5-11 (45.5%)	4-12 (33.3%)
PUNTS/NET AVERAGE:	3-48.7	5-48.0
SACKS/YARDS:	3/17	1/7
FUMBLES/LOST:	1/1	0/0
POINTS OFF TURNOVERS:	10	0
AVG. DRIVE START:	OWN 37	OWN 20
TIME OF POSSESSION:	35:24	24:36

INDIVIDUAL TOP PERFORMERS



PASSING

	CMP	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	RT
J.Herbert	18	35	223	2	2	66.7
M.Jones	18	35	218	0	0	70.9

RUSHING

	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
J.Jackson	3	79	26.3	75	0
A.Ekeler	11	64	5.8	28	1
D.Harris	23	80	3.5	10	1
B.Bolden	4	26	6.5	14	0

RECEIVING

	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
K.Allen	6	77	12.8	41	1
A.Ekeler	6	60	10.0	14	0
J.Cook	2	25	12.5	13	0
J.Palmer	1	24	24.0	24	1
N.Agholor	3	60	20.0	44	0
K.Bourne	4	38	9.5	14	0
J.Meyers	4	37	9.3	17	0
N.Harry	2	30	15.0	15	0

TACKLES (SOLO) - LAC: D.James 13 (7), K.White 9 (6), N.Adderley 7 (5);
NE: K.Dugger 6 (4), M.Judon 5 (4), J.Jackson 5 (4).

SACKS - LAC: J.Tillery 1-7; **NE:** M.Judon 1.5-8, L.Guy 1-5, C.Barmore 0.5-4.

INTERCEPTIONS - LAC: None; **NE:** A.Phillips 2-38-1.

STARTERS

WR.....K.Allen	OLB.....J.Bosa	LT.....J.Meyers	DL.....D.Wise
LT.....R.Slater	DL.....L.Joseph	LT.....I.Wynn	DT.....D.Godchaux
LG.....M.Feiler	DL.....J.Tillery	LG.....T.Karras	RE.....L.Guy
C.....C.Linsley	DL.....J.Jones	C.....D.Andrews	LB.....M.Judon
RG.....M.Schofield III	OLB.....U.Nwosu	RG.....S.Mason	LB.....D.Hightower
RT.....S.Norton	LB.....K.White	RT.....M.Onwenu	LB.....J.Bently
TE.....J.Cook	CB.....C.Harris Jr.	TE.....H.Henry	LCB.....J.Jackson
TE.....D.Parham	CB.....M.Davis	TE.....J.Smith	RCB.....J.Mills
WR.....M.Williams	CB.....A.Samuel Jr.	WR.....N.Agholor	DB.....A.Phillips
QB.....J.Herbert	S.....N.Adderley	QB.....M.Jones	S.....K.Dugger
RB.....A.Ekeler	S.....D.James Jr.	RB.....D.Harris	S.....D.McCourt

GAME STATISTICS

TEAM	1	2	3	4	OT	F
L.A. Chargers	7	0	9	11	—	27
Philadelphia	0	10	7	7	—	24

SCORING SUMMARY

Team	Q	Time	Play
Ravens	1	5:12	L.Murray 14 yd. run (J.Tucker kick) (12-90, 6:39)
Ravens	2	13:24	L.Bell 2 yd. run (J.Tucker kick) (8-74, 4:55)
Ravens	2	7:03	J.Tucker 52 yd. Field Goal (4-5, 2:06)
Chargers	2	4:04	J.Cook 1 yd. pass from J.Herbert (kick failed, wr) (2-27, 0:16)
Ravens	3	7:39	M.Andrews 9 yd. pass from L.Jackson (J.Tucker kick) (12-52, 7:21)
Ravens	3	5:02	J.Tucker 39 yd. Field Goal (4-[-3], 0:53)
Ravens	4	14:55	D.Freeman 9 yd. run (J.Tucker kick) (9-65, 4:45)

TEAM STATISTICS

	LAC	PHI
FIRST DOWNS:	28	20
TOTAL NET YARDS:	445	331
NET RUSHING YARDS:	89	176
NET PASSING YARDS:	356	155
PENALTIES/YARDS:	4-30	3-25
3RD DOWN EFFICIENCY (%):	5-10 (50.0%)	8-12 (66.7%)
SCORING DRIVES (%):	5-8 (62.5%)	4-8 (50.0%)
PUNTS/NET AVERAGE:	0-0	3-43.3
SACKS/YARDS:	1/7	0/0
FUMBLES/LOST:	0/0	1/0
POINTS OFF TURNOVERS:	0	0
AVG. DRIVE START:	OWN 29	OWN 20
TIME OF POSSESSION:	33:37	26:23

INDIVIDUAL TOP PERFORMERS



PASSING

	CMP	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	RT
J.Herbert	32	38	356	2	0	123.2
J.Hurts	11	17	162	1	0	115.3

RUSHING

	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
A.Ekeler	17	59	3.5	16	0
J.Herbert	5	14	2.8	8	1
J.Howard	17	71	4.2	18	1
J.Hurts	10	62	6.2	12	0

RECEIVING

	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
K.Allen	12	104	8.7	18	0
J.Cook	4	48	12.0	23	0
S.Anderson	4	39	9.8	23	1
D.Parham	3	39	13.0	19	1
D.Smith	5	116	23.2	28	1
D.Goedert	3	43	14.3	21	0
Q.Watkins	2	9	4.5	7	0
J.Reagor	1	-6	-6.0	-6	0

TACKLES (SOLO) - LAC: L.Joseph 9 (8), D.Tranquill 9 (4), K.White 8 (4);
PHI: T.Edwards 12 (5), D.Taylor 8 (6), R.McLeod 8 (3).

SACKS - LAC: J.Bosa 1-7; **PHI:** None.

INTERCEPTIONS - LAC: None; **PHI:** None.

STARTERS

WR.....K.Allen	EDGE.....J.Bosa	WR.....D.Smith	DE.....J.Sweat
LT.....R.Slater	DL.....L.Joseph	LT.....J.Mailata	DT.....J.Hargrave
LG.....M.Feiler	DL.....J.Tillery	LG.....L.Dickerson	DT.....F.Cox
C.....C.Linsley	DL.....J.Jones	C.....J.Kelce	DE.....D.Barnett
RG.....M.Schofield III	EDGE.....U.Nwosu	RG.....J.Driscoll	SAM.....G.Avery
RT.....S.Norton	LB.....K.White	RT.....L.Johnson	MIKE...T.Edwards
OL.....S.Kelemete	CB.....C.Harris Jr.	TE.....D.Goedert	WILL....D.Taylor
TE.....D.Parham	CB.....R.Smith	WR.....Q.Watkins	CB.....S.Nelson
WR.....M.Williams	CB.....T.Campbell	WR.....J.Reagor	CB.....D.Slay
QB.....J.Herbert	S.....N.Adderley	QB.....J.Hurts	S.....R.McLeod
RB.....A.Ekeler	S.....D.James Jr.	RB.....B.Scott	S.....A.Harris

2021 GAME SUMMARIES

WEEK 10 vs. MINNESOTA



**VIKINGS 27
CHARGERS 20**

Sunday, Nov. 14, 2021
SoFi Stadium — Inglewood, Calif.



GAME STATISTICS

TEAM	1	2	3	4	OT	F
Minnesota	0	13	7	7	—	27
L.A. Chargers	0	10	7	3	—	20

SCORING SUMMARY

Team	Q	Time	Play
Vikings	2	14:12	G.Joseph 46 yd. Field Goal (10-59, 6:00)
Chargers	2	11:28	D.Hopkins 46 yd. Field Goal (6-48, 2:44)
Vikings	2	6:38	G.Joseph 30 yd. Field Goal (11-50, 4:50)
Vikings	2	3:26	T.Conklin 5 yd. pass from K.Cousins (G.Joseph kick) (6-31, 3:00)
Chargers	2	1:30	L.Rountree 1 yd. run (D.Hopkins kick) (8-75, 1:56)
Chargers	3	10:40	A.Ekeler 2 yd. pass from J.Herbert (D.Hopkins kick) (10-75, 4:20)
Vikings	3	2:33	T.Conklin 1 yd. pass from K.Cousins (G.Joseph kick) (9-66, 3:52)
Vikings	4	9:29	D.Cook 1 yd. run (G.Joseph kick) (12-68, 7:04)
Chargers	4	4:36	D.Hopkins 24 yd. Field Goal (12-69, 4:53)

TEAM STATISTICS

	MIN	LAC
FIRST DOWNS:	24	20
TOTAL NET YARDS:	381	253
NET RUSHING YARDS:	103	82
NET PASSING YARDS:	278	171
PENALTIES/YARDS:	10-118	7-52
3RD DOWN EFFICIENCY (%):	5-14 (35.7%)	5-12 (41.7%)
SCORING DRIVES (%):	5-11 (45.5%)	4-10 (40.0%)
PUNTS/NET AVERAGE:	3-45.7	5-48.4
SACKS/YARDS:	2/24	2/16
FUMBLES/LOST:	1/1	0/0
POINTS OFF TURNOVERS:	7	0
AVG. DRIVE START:	OWN 34	OWN 24
TIME OF POSSESSION:	36:15	23:45

INDIVIDUAL TOP PERFORMERS



PASSING

	CMP	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	RT
J.Herbert	20	34	195	1	1	72.5
K.Cousins	25	37	294	2	0	109.5

RUSHING

	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
A.Ekeler	11	44	4.0	9	0
J.Herbert	2	22	11.0	17	0
D.Cook	24	94	3.9	12	1
A.Mattison	4	16	4.0	7	0

RECEIVING

	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
K.Allen	8	98	12.3	26	0
M.Williams	4	33	8.3	11	0
J.Palmer	3	22	7.3	13	0
A.Ekeler	3	15	5.0	7	1
J.Jefferson	9	143	15.9	27	0
A.Thielen	5	65	13.0	19	0
D.Cook	3	24	8.0	15	0
C.Ham	3	13	4.3	7	0

TACKLES (SOLO) - LAC: D.James 12 (9), K.White 12 (8), T.Campbell 6 (6); **MIN:** E.Kendricks 8 (7), B.Breeland 6 (6), C.Bynum 6 (5).

SACKS - LAC: J.Bosa 1-7, A.Ogbongbemiga 1-9; **MIN:** E.Kendricks 1-15, C.Bynum 1-9.

INTERCEPTIONS - LAC: None; **MIN:** E.Kendricks 1-0.

STARTERS

WR.....K.Allen	OLB.....J.Bosa	WR.....A.Thielen	LE.....D.Wonnum
LT.....R.Slater	DL.....L.Joseph	LT.....C.Darrisaw	NT.....A.Watts
LG.....M.Feiler	DL.....J.Jones	LG.....E.Cleveland	DT.....D.Tomlinson
C.....C.Linsley	OLB.....U.Nwosu	C.....M.Cole	RE.....E.Griffin
RG.....M.Schofield III	LB.....K.Murray Jr.	RG.....O.Udoh	LB.....B.Lynch
RT.....S.Norton	LB.....K.White	RT.....B.O'Neil	MLB.....E.Kendricks
TE.....D.Parham	CB.....C.Harris Jr.	TE.....T.Conklin	WLB.....N.Vigil
TE.....T.McKitty	CB.....T.Campbell	TE.....C.Herdon	LCB.....C.Dantzier
WR.....M.Williams	CB.....A.Samuel Jr.	WR.....J.Jefferson	RCB.....B.Breeland
QB.....J.Herbert	S.....A.Gilman	QB.....K.Cousins	SS.....C.Bynum
RB.....A.Ekeler	S.....D.James Jr.	RB.....D.Cook	FS.....X.Woods

WEEK 11 vs. PITTSBURGH



**CHARGERS 41
STEELERS 37**

Sunday, Nov. 21, 2021
SoFi Stadium — Inglewood, Calif.



GAME STATISTICS

TEAM	1	2	3	4	OT	F
Pittsburgh	3	7	0	27	—	37
L.A. Chargers	7	10	10	14	—	41

SCORING SUMMARY

Team	Q	Time	Play
Steelers	1	8:29	C.Boswell 36 yd. Field Goal (13-57, 6:31)
Chargers	1	2:09	A.Ekeler 6 yd. run (D.Hopkins kick) (12-73, 6:20)
Chargers	2	3:42	A.Ekeler 10 yd. rec. (D.Hopkins kick) (12-98, 6:54)
Steelers	2	1:09	D.Johnson 10 yd. rec. (C.Boswell kick) (7-64, 2:33)
Chargers	2	0:02	D.Hopkins 30 yd. Field Goal (8-63, 1:07)
Chargers	3	11:50	A.Ekeler 17 yd. rec. (D.Hopkins kick) (6-70, 3:10)
Chargers	3	3:40	D.Hopkins 41 yd. Field Goal (11-51, 6:28)
Steelers	4	14:10	C.Boswell 36 yd. Field Goal (10-57, 4:30)
Steelers	4	11:35	N.Harris 1 yd. run (C.Boswell kick) (4-3, 0:58)
Chargers	4	8:48	A.Ekeler 5 yd. run (D.Hopkins kick) (7-75, 2:47)
Steelers	4	4:49	E.Ebron 5 yd. rec. (C.Boswell kick) (9-75, 3:59)
Steelers	4	4:23	P.Freiermuth 5 yd. rec. (C.Boswell kick) (2-11, 0:13)
Steelers	4	3:24	C.Boswell 45 yd. Field Goal (4-7, 0:19)
Chargers	4	2:09	M.Williams 53 yd. pass rec. (D.Hopkins kick) (3-75, 1:15)

TEAM STATISTICS

	PIT	LAC
FIRST DOWNS:	22	33
TOTAL NET YARDS:	300	533
NET RUSHING YARDS:	55	159
NET PASSING YARDS:	245	374
PENALTIES/YARDS:	8-38	12-75
3RD DOWN EFFICIENCY (%):	8-15 (53.3%)	7-12 (58.3%)
SCORING DRIVES (%):	7-11 (63.6%)	7-11 (63.6%)
PUNTS/NET AVERAGE:	1-46.0	1-0.0
SACKS/YARDS:	2/8	3/28
FUMBLES/LOST:	1/0	0/0
POINTS OFF TURNOVERS:	7	0
AVG. DRIVE START:	OWN 44	OWN 30
TIME OF POSSESSION:	31:46	28:14

INDIVIDUAL TOP PERFORMERS



PASSING

	CMP	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	RT
J.Herbert	30	41	382	3	1	116.1
B.Roethlisberger	28	44	273	3	0	103.7

RUSHING

	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
J.Herbert	9	90	10.0	36	0
A.Ekeler	11	50	4.5	12	2
N.Harris	12	39	3.3	12	1
B.Snell	2	7	3.5	4	0

RECEIVING

	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
K.Allen	9	112	12.4	30	0
M.Williams	5	97	19.4	53	1
A.Ekeler	6	65	10.8	17	2
D.Parham	4	38	9.5	12	0
D.Johnson	7	101	14.4	32	1
C.Claypool	5	93	18.6	37	0
E.Ebron	3	24	8.0	18	1
N.Harris	5	20	4.0	7	0

TACKLES (SOLO) - LAC: K.White 9 (6), A.Samuel Jr. 7 (5), D.James Jr. 6 (2); **PIT:** C.Sutton 10 (7), T.Norwood 7 (6), A.Highsmith 6 (3).

SACKS - LAC: J.Bosa 1-11, U.Nwosu 1-9, K.Fackrell 1-8; **PIT:** A.Highsmith 1.5-6, T.Charlton 0.5-2.

INTERCEPTIONS - LAC: None; **PIT:** C.Sutton 1-4-0.

STARTERS

WR.....K.Allen	OLB.....J.Bosa	WR.....D.Johnson	DT.....C.Heyward
LT.....R.Slater	DL.....J.Jones	LT.....D.Moore	DE.....C.Wormley
LG.....M.Feiler	DL.....J.Gaziano	LG.....J.Hassenaue	DE.....T.Charlton
C.....C.Linsley	OLB.....L.Joseph	C.....K.Green	DE.....I.Buggs
RG.....M.Schofield III	OLB.....U.Nwosu	RG.....T.Turner	LB.....D.Bush
RT.....S.Norton	LB.....K.White	RT.....C.Okorafor	LB.....J.Schobert
TE.....J.Cook	LB.....K.Murray Jr.	TE.....E.Ebron	LB.....A.Highsmith
TE.....D.Parham	CB.....M.Davis	TE.....P.Freiermuth	CB.....C.Sutton
TE.....S.Anderson	CB.....A.Samuel Jr.	WR.....C.Claypool	CB.....J.Pierre
QB.....J.Herbert	S.....N.Adderley	QB.....B.Roethlisberger	DB.....T.Norwood
RB.....A.Ekeler	S.....D.James Jr.	RB.....N.Harris	SS.....Te.Edmunds

2021 GAME SUMMARIES

WEEK 12 AT DENVER



BRONCOS 28 CHARGERS 13

Sunday, Nov. 28, 2021

Empower Field at Mile High — Denver, Colo.



GAME STATISTICS

TEAM	1	2	3	4	OT	F
L.A. Chargers	0	7	0	6	—	13
Denver	7	7	0	14	—	28

SCORING SUMMARY

Team	Q	Time	Play
Broncos	1	4:31	T.Bridgewater 11 yd. run (B.McManus kick) (8-50, 4:24)
Broncos	2	12:46	J.Williams 9 yd. run (B.McManus kick) (11-75, 5:46)
Chargers	2	0:31	A.Ekeler 12 yd. pass from J.Herbert (D.Hopkins kick) (6-47, 0:45)
Broncos	4	8:54	E.Saubert 1 yd. pass from T.Bridgewater (B.McManus kick) (10-80, 5:36)
Broncos	4	7:28	P.Surtain 70 yd. interception return (B.McManus kick)
Chargers	4	4:34	J.Cook 16 yd. pass from J.Herbert (pass failed) (9-75, 2:54)

TEAM STATISTICS

	LAC	DEN
FIRST DOWNS:	20	23
TOTAL NET YARDS:	357	302
NET RUSHING YARDS:	72	147
NET PASSING YARDS:	288	155
PENALTIES/YARDS:	9-75	5-35
3RD DOWN EFFICIENCY (%):	7-14 (50.0%)	8-11 (72.7%)
SCORING DRIVES (%):	2-9 (22.2%)	3-3 (33.3%)
PUNTS/NET AVERAGE:	3-45.3	3-41.7
SACKS/YARDS:	1/0	3/18
FUMBLES/LOST:	0/0	1/1
POINTS OFF TURNOVERS:	7	14
AVG. DRIVE START:	OWN 24	OWN 32
TIME OF POSSESSION:	30:23	29:37

INDIVIDUAL TOP PERFORMERS



PASSING

	CMP	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	RT
J.Herbert	28	44	303	2	2	80.0
T.Bridgewater	11	18	129	1	0	101.4
D.Lock	4	7	26	0	1	25.6

RUSHING

	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
J.Herbert	3	36	9.0	13	0
A.Ekeler	12	31	2.6	6	0
M.Gordon	17	83	4.6	16	0
J.Williams	14	54	3.9	12	1

RECEIVING

	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
K.Allen	7	85	12.1	24	0
A.Ekeler	6	68	11.3	34	1
M.Williams	4	39	9.8	13	0
J.Cook	2	25	12.5	16	1
J.Williams	3	116	19.0	42	0
T.Patrick	2	26	13.0	19	0
J.Jeudy	2	25	12.5	13	0
C.Sutton	2	17	8.5	12	0

TACKLES (SOLO) - LAC: K.White 12 (8), D.James 7 (5), Adderley 7 (5); **DEN:** K.Fuller 9 (8), J.Simmons 8 (7), B.Browning 7 (5).

SACKS - LAC: J.Bosa 1-0; **DEN:** S.Weatherly 1-8, M.Agim 1-7, M.Reed 0.5-1.5, D.Williams 0.5-1.5.

INTERCEPTIONS - LAC: D.James 1-5-0; **DEN:** P.Surtain 2-70-1.

STARTERS

WR.....K.Allen	EDGE.....J.Bosa	WR.....T.Patrick	DE.....D.Jones
LT.....R.Slater	DL.....J.Tillery	LT.....C.Anderson	NT.....M.Purcell
LG.....S.Kelemete	DL.....J.Jones	LG.....D.Risner	DE.....D.Williams
C.....C.Linsley	EDGE....U.Nwosu	C.....K.Cushenberry	OLB....B.Chubb
RG....M.Schofield III	LB.....K.White	RG....Q.Meinerz	WLB....M.Reed
RT....S.Norton	LB.....D.Tranquill	RT....C.Fleming	ILB....B.Browning
TE.....D.Parham	CB.....M.Davis	TE.....N.Fant	ILB....K.Young
TE.....T.McKitty	CB....C.Harris Jr.	WR....C.Sutton	LCB....P.Surtain
WR....M.Williams	CB....T.Campbell	WR....J.Jeudy	RCB....R.Darby
QB....J.Herbert	S.....N.Adderley	QB....T.Bridgewater	FS.....J.Simmons
RB....A.Ekeler	S.....D.James Jr.	RB....M.Gordon	SS.....C.Sterns

WEEK 13 AT CINCINNATI



CHARGERS 41 BENGALS 22

Sunday, Dec. 5, 2021

Paul Brown Stadium — Cincinnati, Ohio



GAME STATISTICS

TEAM	1	2	3	4	OT	F
L.A. Chargers	16	8	0	17	—	41
Cincinnati	0	13	9	0	—	22

SCORING SUMMARY

Team	Q	Time	Play
Chargers	1	11:31	K.Allen 4 yd. pass from J.Herbert (kick failed, wr) (9-55, 3:29)
Chargers	1	6:28	D.Hopkins 43 yd. Field Goal (4-4, 2:19)
Chargers	1	1:34	K.Allen 7 yd. pass from J.Herbert (D.Hopkins kick) (5-73, 2:54)
Chargers	2	10:12	J.Guyton 44 yd. pass from J.Herbert (K.Allen-J.Herbert pass) (3-58, 1:25)
Bengals	2	7:39	T.Higgins 29 yd. pass from J.Burrow (kick failed, wr) (6-75, 2:33)
Bengals	2	2:40	J.Burrow 6 yd. run (E.McPherson kick) (3-19, 1:29)
Bengals	3	9:53	E.McPherson 48 yd. Field Goal (10-45, 5:07)
Bengals	3	7:10	J.Mixon 7 yd. run (run failed) (5-32, 1:50)
Chargers	4	13:43	T.Campbell 61 yd. fumble return (D.Hopkins kick)
Chargers	4	10:49	A.Ekeler 1 yd. run (D.Hopkins kick) (4-53, 2:03)
Chargers	4	1:10	D.Hopkins 43 yd. Field Goal (7-15, 3:49)

TEAM STATISTICS

	LAC	CIN
FIRST DOWNS:	18	21
TOTAL NET YARDS:	363	356
NET RUSHING YARDS:	79	96
NET PASSING YARDS:	284	260
PENALTIES/YARDS:	7-51	7-63
3RD DOWN EFFICIENCY (%):	4-13 (30.8%)	6-12 (50.0%)
SCORING DRIVES (%):	6-13 (46.2%)	4-15 (26.7%)
PUNTS/NET AVERAGE:	4-42.3	4-45.0
SACKS/YARDS:	6/40	4/33
FUMBLES/LOST:	2/2	2/2
POINTS OFF TURNOVERS:	17	13
AVG. DRIVE START:	OWN 37	OWN 31
TIME OF POSSESSION:	28:45	31:15

INDIVIDUAL TOP PERFORMERS



PASSING

	CMP	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	RT
J.Herbert	26	35	317	3	1	118.4
J.Burrow	24	40	300	1	2	70.8

RUSHING

	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
A.Ekeler	14	59	4.2	15	1
J.Jackson	6	15	2.5	7	0
J.Mixon	19	54	2.8	10	1
S.Perine	5	36	7.2	17	0

RECEIVING

	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
M.Williams	5	110	22.0	47	0
J.Guyton	4	90	22.5	44	1
A.Ekeler	5	45	9.0	12	0
K.Allen	5	34	6.8	10	2
T.Higgins	9	138	15.3	29	1
T.Boyd	5	85	17.0	32	0
J.Chase	5	52	10.4	14	0
C.Uzomah	3	20	6.7	10	0

TACKLES (SOLO) - LAC: K.White 10 (7), D.Tranquill 10 (6), D.James 7 (3); **CIN:** J.Bachie 9 (6), M.Hilton 9 (6), G.Pratt 9 (3).

SACKS - LAC: U.Nwosu 2-11, D.Tranquill 1-10, J.Jones 1-7, C.Rumph 1-5, N.Adderley 0.5-3.5, D.James 0.5-3.5; **CIN:** V.Bell 1-12, L.Ogunjobi 1-9, T.Hendrickson 1-6, B.Hill 0.5-3, S.Hubbard 0.5-3.

INTERCEPTIONS - LAC: M.Davis 1-0-0, C.Harris 1-0-0; **CIN:** C.Awuzie 1-0-0.

STARTERS

WR.....K.Allen	EDGE.....J.Bosa	WR.....J.Chase	LDE...S.Hubbard
LT.....R.Slater	DL.....J.Tillery	LT.....J.Williams	NT.....D.Reader
LG.....M.Feiler	DL.....J.Jones	LG.....Q.Spain	DT.....L.Ogunjobi
C.....C.Linsley	EDGE....U.Nwosu	C.....T.Hill	RDE.T.Hendrickson
RG....M.Schofield III	LB.....K.White	RG....H.Adeniji	LB.....M.Reed
RT....S.Norton	LB.....D.Tranquill	RT....I.Prince	LB....B.Browning
TE.....J.Cook	CB.....M.Davis	TE.....C.Uzomah	NCB....M.Hilton
WR....M.Williams	CB....C.Harris Jr.	WR....T.Boyd	CB.....E.Apple
WR....J.Palmer	CB....T.Campbell	WR....T.Higgins	CB.....C.Awuzie
QB....J.Herbert	S.....N.Adderley	QB....J.Burrow	S.....V.Bell
RB....A.Ekeler	S.....D.James Jr.	RB....J.Mixon	S.....J.Bates

2021 GAME SUMMARIES

WEEK 14 vs. NEW YORK GIANTS



CHARGERS 37 GIANTS 21

Sunday, Dec. 12, 2021
SoFi Stadium — Inglewood, Calif.



GAME STATISTICS

TEAM	1	2	3	4	OT	F
N.Y. Giants	7	0	0	14	—	21
L.A. Chargers	7	17	6	7	—	37

SCORING SUMMARY

Team	Q	Time	Play
Chargers	1	4:44	A.Ekeler 1 yd. run (D.Hopkins kick) (9-60, 4:33)
Giants	1	1:29	E.Penny 3 yd. pass from M.Glennon (G.Gano kick) (7-75, 3:15)
Chargers	2	12:07	J.Palmer 12 yd. pass from J.Herbert (D.Hopkins kick) (9-60, 4:22)
Chargers	2	4:15	D.Hopkins 27 yd. Field Goal (12-69, 6:25)
Chargers	2	0:17	J.Guyton 59 yd. pass from J.Herbert (D.Hopkins kick) (4-75, 0:23)
Chargers	3	9:36	D.Hopkins 28 yd. Field Goal (10-67, 5:24)
Chargers	3	5:05	D.Hopkins 39 yd. Field Goal (6-17, 2:56)
Chargers	4	9:28	J.Cook 1 yd. pass from J.Herbert (D.Hopkins kick) (11-41, 5:55)
Giants	4	4:33	S.Barkley 18 yd. pass from M.Glennon (pass failed) (10-75, 4:55)
Giants	4	1:18	M.Glennon 7 yd. run (E.Penny run) (7-63, 2:11)

TEAM STATISTICS

	NYG	LAC
FIRST DOWNS:	20	26
TOTAL NET YARDS:	317	423
NET RUSHING YARDS:	136	152
NET PASSING YARDS:	181	271
PENALTIES/YARDS:	3-20	6-38
3RD DOWN EFFICIENCY (%):	7-14 (50.0%)	7-13 (53.8%)
SCORING DRIVES (%):	3-12 (25.0%)	7-11 (63.6%)
PUNTS/NET AVERAGE:	5-45.6	3-26.0
SACKS/YARDS:	2/4	2/10
FUMBLES/LOST:	1/1	0/0
POINTS OFF TURNOVERS:	0	7
AVG. DRIVE START:	OWN 28	OWN 34
TIME OF POSSESSION:	25:40	34:20

INDIVIDUAL TOP PERFORMERS



PASSING

	CMP	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	RT
J.Herbert	23	31	275	3	0	133.1
M.Glennon	17	36	191	2	1	70.5

RUSHING

	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
A.Ekeler	12	67	5.6	17	1
J.Jackson	9	35	3.9	9	0
S.Barkley	16	64	4.0	13	0
A.Mattison	8	56	7.0	9	0

RECEIVING

	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
J.Guyton	3	87	29.0	59	1
J.Palmer	5	66	13.2	36	1
M.Williams	6	61	10.2	25	0
A.Ekeler	2	17	8.5	10	0
K.Rudolph	2	66	33.0	60	0
S.Barkley	3	31	10.3	18	1
D.Booker	4	28	7.0	17	0
S.Shepard	2	27	13.5	24	0

TACKLES (SOLO) - LAC: K.White 10 (5), N.Adderley 6 (3), J.Jones 5 (4); **NYG:** A.Robinson 9 (7), L.Ryan 9 (6), T.Crowder 8 (2).

SACKS - LAC: J.Bosa 1-8, J.Jones 1-2; **NYG:** D.Lawrence 1-3, A.Ojulari 1-1.

INTERCEPTIONS - LAC: N.Niemann 1-0-0; **NYG:** None.

STARTERS

WR..... M.Williams	OLB..... J.Bosa	WR..... K.Golladay	DL..... D.Lawrence
LT..... R.Slater	DL..... L.Joseph	LT..... A.Thomas	DL..... A.Johnson
LG..... M.Feiler	DL..... J.Jones	LG..... M.Skura	DL..... L.Williams
C..... C.Linsley	OLB..... U.Nwosu	C..... B.Price	WIL..... R.Ragland
RG..... M.Schofield III	LB..... K.White	RG..... W.Hernandez	MLB..... T.Crowder
RT..... S.Norton	LB..... D.Tranquill	RT..... N.Solder	SLB..... L.Carter
TE..... J.Cook	CB..... C.Harris Jr.	TE..... K.Rudolph	LCB..... J.Bradberry
RB..... J.Jackson	CB..... T.Campbell	TE..... C.Myarick	RCB..... A.Robinson
WR..... J.Palmer	CB..... M.Davis	TE..... C.Myarick	SS..... X.McKinney
QB..... J.Herbert	S..... T.Marshall	QB..... M.Glennon	FS..... L.Ryan
RB..... A.Ekeler	S..... N.Adderley	RB..... S.Barkley	S..... J.Love

WEEK 15 vs. KANSAS CITY



CHIEFS 34 CHARGERS 28

Thursday, Dec. 16, 2021
SoFi Stadium — Inglewood, Calif.



GAME STATISTICS

TEAM	1	2	3	4	OT	F
Kansas City	7	3	3	15	6	34
L.A. Chargers	0	14	0	14	0	28

SCORING SUMMARY

Team	Q	Time	Play
Chiefs	1	7:34	M.Burton 7 yd. run (H.Butker kick) (11-95, 5:53)
Chiefs	2	14:48	H.Butker 30 yd. Field Goal (10-46, 5:30)
Chargers	2	9:12	J.Herbert 1 yd. run (D.Hopkins kick) (10-75, 5:36)
Chargers	2	3:15	J.Guyton 4 yd. pass from J.Herbert (D.Hopkins kick) (9-42, 4:56)
Chiefs	3	12:12	H.Butker 33 yd. Field Goal (7-61, 2:48)
Chargers	4	9:29	A.Ekeler 2 yd. run (D.Hopkins kick) (1-2, 0:05)
Chiefs	4	7:44	T.Hill 1 yd. pass from P.Mahomes (P.Mahomes-C.Edwards-Helaire pass) (5-75, 1:45)
Chargers	4	2:19	K.Allen 8 yd. pass from J.Herbert (D.Hopkins kick) (11-75, 5:25)
Chargers	4	1:16	T.Kelce 7 yd. pass from P.Mahomes (H.Butker kick) (8-75, 1:03)
Chiefs	OT	8:45	T.Kelce 34 yd. pass from P.Mahomes

TEAM STATISTICS

	KC	LAC
FIRST DOWNS:	26	28
TOTAL NET YARDS:	496	428
NET RUSHING YARDS:	68	192
NET PASSING YARDS:	410	236
PENALTIES/YARDS:	7-51	7-63
3RD DOWN EFFICIENCY (%):	7-12 (58.3%)	6-13 (46.2%)
SCORING DRIVES (%):	6-11 (45.5%)	4-10 (40.0%)
PUNTS/NET AVERAGE:	1-32.0	1-41.0
SACKS/YARDS:	0/0	1/0
FUMBLES/LOST:	1/1	1/1
POINTS OFF TURNOVERS:	3	7
AVG. DRIVE START:	OWN 22	OWN 41
TIME OF POSSESSION:	28:12	33:03

INDIVIDUAL TOP PERFORMERS



PASSING

	CMP	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	RT
J.Herbert	22	38	236	2	1	82.8
P.Mahomes	31	47	410	3	1	105.8

RUSHING

	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
J.Jackson	13	86	6.6	22	0
A.Ekeler	12	59	4.9	15	1
C.Edwards-Helaire	9	32	3.6	9	0
P.Mahomes	3	32	10.7	32	0

RECEIVING

	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
K.Allen	6	78	13.0	29	1
M.Williams	3	49	16.3	27	0
J.Cook	3	32	10.7	15	0
A.Ekeler	4	23	5.8	8	0
T.Kelce	10	191	19.1	69	2
T.Hill	12	148	12.3	40	1
B.Pringle	3	22	7.3	10	0
M.Burton	2	20	10.0	20	0

TACKLES (SOLO) - LAC: K.White 9 (9), T.Marshall 7 (3), T.Campbell 6 (4); **KC:** N.Bolton 14 (10), C.Ward 10 (7), B.Niemann 9 (5).

SACKS - LAC: J.Bosa 1-0; **KC:** None.

INTERCEPTIONS - LAC: U.Nwosu 1-2-0; **KC:** A.Hitchens 1-0-0.

STARTERS

WR..... K.Allen	EDGE..... J.Bosa	WR..... T.Hill	LDT..... S.J.Reed
LT..... T.Pipkins	DL..... J.Tillery	LT..... O.Brown	RDT..... D.Nadi
LG..... M.Feiler	DL..... L.Joseph	LG..... J.Thuney	RDE..... F.Clark
C..... C.Linsley	DL..... J.Jones	C..... C.Humphrey	LB..... M.Ingram III
RG..... M.Schofield III	EDGE..... U.Nwosu	RG..... T.Smith	LB..... A.Hitchens
RT..... S.Norton	LB..... K.White	RT..... K.Niang	LB..... N.Bolton
TE..... S.Anderson	CB..... M.Davis	TE..... T.Kelce	RCB..... R.Fenton
WR..... M.Williams	CB..... C.Harris Jr.	WR..... D.Robinson	LCB..... C.Ward
WR..... J.Palmer	CB..... T.Campbell	WR..... B.Pringle	CB..... M.Hughes
QB..... J.Herbert	S..... N.Adderley	QB..... P.Mahomes	S..... T.Mathieu
RB..... A.Ekeler	S..... D.James Jr.	RB..... C.Edwards-Helaire	S..... D.Sorensen

2021 GAME SUMMARIES

WEEK 16 AT HOUSTON

WEEK 17 vs. DENVER



**TEXANS 41
CHARGERS 29**

Sunday, Dec. 26, 2021
NRG Stadium – Houston, Texas



**CHARGERS 34
BRONCOS 13**

Sunday, Jan. 2, 2022
SoFi Stadium – Inglewood, Calif.



GAME STATISTICS

TEAM	1	2	3	4	OT	F
L.A. Chargers	6	6	3	14	—	29
Houston	7	10	0	24	—	41

SCORING SUMMARY

Team	Q	Time	Play
Chargers	1	10:55	D.Hopkins 50 yd. Field Goal (8-43, 4:05)
Texans	1	6:25	R.Burkhead 25 yd. run (D.Eberle kick) (8-75, 4:30)
Chargers	1	1:57	D.Hopkins 46 yd. Field Goal (9-54, 4:28)
Chargers	2	11:15	J.Jackson 17 yd. run (run failed) (7-70, 3:38)
Texans	2	5:11	D.Eberle 51 yd. Field Goal (12-42, 6:04)
Texans	2	0:27	C.Conley 41 yd. pass from D.Mills (D.Eberle kick) (7-94, 3:30)
Chargers	3	5:42	D.Hopkins 35 yd. Field Goal (11-41, 5:25)
Texans	4	13:37	R.Burkhead 1 yd. run (D.Eberle kick) (13-75, 7:05)
Texans	4	8:54	D.Eberle 25 yd. Field Goal (8-40, 3:54)
Chargers	4	5:50	J.Jackson 9 yd. run (Herbert-Cook pass) (9-75, 3:04)
Texans	4	2:32	N.Collins 13 yd. pass from D.Mills (D.Eberle kick) (7-72, 3:18)
Texans	4	1:49	T.Thomas 48 yd. interception return (D.Eberle kick)
Chargers	4	0:34	J.Palmer 3 yd. pass from J.Herbert (pass failed) (6-75, 1:15)

TEAM STATISTICS

	LAC	HOU
FIRST DOWNS:	25	26
TOTAL NET YARDS:	417	437
NET RUSHING YARDS:	89	189
NET PASSING YARDS:	328	248
PENALTIES/YARDS:	5-49	10-70
3RD DOWN EFFICIENCY (%):	6-9 (66.7%)	9-13 (69.2%)
SCORING DRIVES (%):	6-10 (60.0%)	6-9 (66.7%)
PUNTS/NET AVERAGE:	0-0.0	1-53.0
SACKS/YARDS:	1/6	1/8
FUMBLES/LOST:	1/1	0/0
POINTS OFF TURNOVERS:	0	3
AVG. DRIVE START:	OWN 28	OWN 29
TIME OF POSSESSION:	25:08	34:52

INDIVIDUAL TOP PERFORMERS



PASSING

	CMP	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	RT
J.Herbert	27	35	336	1	2	92.1
D.Mills	21	27	254	2	0	130.6

RUSHING

	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
J.Jackson	11	64	5.8	17	2
J.Herbert	4	15	3.8	8	0
R.Burkhead	22	149	6.8	36	2
R.Freeman	12	34	2.8	13	0

RECEIVING

	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
J.Jackson	8	98	12.3	25	0
J.Moore	3	56	18.7	24	0
J.Cook	3	44	14.7	18	0
J.Palmer	5	43	8.6	12	1
C.Conley	3	60	20.0	41	1
B.Jordan	4	56	14.0	27	0
P.Dorsett	3	55	18.3	36	0
C.Moore	4	40	10.0	23	0

TACKLES (SOLO) - LAC: K.White 11 (6), C.Covington 9 (3), A.Gilman 6 (6); **HOU:** N.Hewitt 11 (8), T.Thomas 8 (6), D.King 7 (7).

SACKS - LAC: J.Tillery 1-6; **HOU:** M.Dwumfour 0.5-4, C.Smith 0.5-4.

INTERCEPTIONS - LAC: None; **HOU:** T.Thomas 1-48-1, J.Owens 1-7-0.

STARTERS

WR..... K.Allen	EDGE..... U.Nwosu	WR..... N.Collins	DE..... D.Walker
LT..... R.Slater	DL..... J.Tillery	LT..... G.Christian	DT..... R.Blacklock
LG..... M.Feiler	DL..... J.Jones	LG..... C.Toner	DT..... M.Dwumfor
C..... S.Quessenberry	DL..... C.Covington	C..... J.Morrissey	DE..... D.Harris
RG..... M.Schofield III	LB..... K.White	RG..... M.Scharching	SLB..... G.Wallow
RT..... S.Norton	LB..... D.Tranquill	RT..... C.Heck	MLB..... N.Hewitt
TE..... J.Cook	LB..... K.Murray Jr.	TE..... A.Auclair	CB..... T.Thomas
WR..... J.Moore	CB..... D.Harris	TE..... P.Brown	CB..... T.Smith
WR..... J.Palmer	CB..... A.Samuel Jr.	WR..... C.Conley	CB..... D.King
QB..... J.Herbert	S..... N.Adderley	QB..... D.Mills	S..... J.Owens
RB..... J.Hackson	S..... A.Gilman	RB..... R.Burkhead	S..... Ju.Reid

GAME STATISTICS

TEAM	1	2	3	4	OT	F
Denver	0	3	0	10	—	13
L.A. Chargers	7	10	3	14	—	34

SCORING SUMMARY

Team	Q	Time	Play
Chargers	1	11:49	A.Ekeler 3 yd. run (D.Hopkins kick) (7-55, 3:11)
Chargers	2	11:27	D.Hopkins 19 yd. Field Goal (14-69, 6:45)
Chargers	2	0:14	K.Allen 8 yd. pass from J.Herbert (D.Hopkins kick) (11-49, 3:00)
Broncos	2	0:00	B.McManus 61 yd. Field Goal (3-32, 0:14)
Chargers	3	7:09	D.Hopkins 23 yd. Field Goal (14-78, 5:41)
Broncos	4	14:53	B.McManus 23 yd. Field Goal (12-70, 7:16)
Chargers	4	14:40	A.Roberts 101 yd. kickoff return (D.Hopkins kick) (0-0, 0:13)
Chargers	4	10:18	M.Williams 45 yd. pass from J.Herbert (D.Hopkins kick) (3-52, 1:04)
Broncos	4	6:31	N.Fant 5 yd. pass from D.Lock (B.McManus kick) (6-75, 3:47)

TEAM STATISTICS

	DEN	LAC
FIRST DOWNS:	18	21
TOTAL NET YARDS:	319	341
NET RUSHING YARDS:	83	104
NET PASSING YARDS:	236	237
PENALTIES/YARDS:	3-23	3-22
3RD DOWN EFFICIENCY (%):	3-11 (27.2%)	9-15 (60.0%)
SCORING DRIVES (%):	3-9 (33.3%)	6-10 (60.0%)
PUNTS/NET AVERAGE:	3-45.7	3-38.3
SACKS/YARDS:	0/0	1/10
FUMBLES/LOST:	1/1	0/0
POINTS OFF TURNOVERS:	0	7
AVG. DRIVE START:	OWN 23	OWN 34
TIME OF POSSESSION:	29:44	30:16

INDIVIDUAL TOP PERFORMERS



PASSING

	CMP	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	RT
J.Herbert	22	31	237	2	0	114.6
D.Lock	18	25	246	1	1	116.2
K.Hinton	1	1	1	0	0	79.2

RUSHING

	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
A.Ekeler	17	58	3.4	14	1
J.Jackson	12	41	3.4	7	0
M.Gordon III	10	43	4.3	12	0
J.Williams	14	30	2.1	7	0

RECEIVING

	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
M.Williams	3	63	21.0	45	1
A.Ekeler	3	54	18.0	40	0
K.Allen	4	44	11.0	16	1
T.McKitty	3	22	7.3	8	0
N.Fant	6	92	15.3	35	2
C.Sutton	3	60	20.0	44	0
S.Williams	1	34	34.0	34	0
M.Gordon III	3	29	9.7	24	0

TACKLES (SOLO) - LAC: K.White 11 (5), N.Adderley 8 (5), M.Davis 6 (4); **DEN:** J.Griffith 12 (5), M.Kiser 12 (6), K.Jackson 8 (7).

SACKS - LAC: J.Tillery 1-10; **DEN:** None.

INTERCEPTIONS - LAC: None; **DEN:** None.

STARTERS

WR..... K.Allen	EDGE..... J.Bosa	WR..... C.Sutton	DE..... S.Harris
LT..... R.Slater	DL..... J.Tillery	LT..... G.Bolles	DE..... D.Jones
LG..... M.Feiler	DL..... L.Joseph	LG..... D.Risner	ILB..... J.Griffith
C..... C.Linsley	DL..... J.Jones	C..... L.Cushenberry	ILB..... M.Kiser
RG..... M.Schofield III	LB..... K.White	RG..... Q.Meinerz	OLB..... M.Reed
RT..... T.Pipkins III	LB..... A.Ogbongbemiga	RT..... C.Fleming	OLB..... A.Patrick
TE..... T.McKitty	CB..... M.Davis	TE..... N.Fant	CB..... N.Hairston
WR..... M.Williams	CB..... C.Harris Jr.	WR..... K.Hinton	CB..... P.Surtain II
WR..... J.Palmer	CB..... A.Samuel	WR..... S.Williams	CB..... K.Fuller
QB..... J.Herbert	S..... N.Adderley	QB..... D.Lock	SS..... K.Jackson
RB..... A.Ekeler	S..... D.James Jr.	RB..... M.Gordon III	FS..... J.Simmons

2021 GAME SUMMARIES

WEEK 18 AT LAS VEGAS



**RAIDERS 35
CHARGERS 32**



Sunday, Jan. 9, 2022

Allegiant Stadium – Las Vegas, Nev.

GAME STATISTICS

TEAM	1	2	3	4	OT	F
L.A. Chargers	0	14	0	15	3	32
Las Vegas	10	7	3	9	6	35

SCORING SUMMARY

Team	Q	Time	Play
Raiders	1	10:50	D.Carlson 24 yd. Field Goal (9-61, 4:10)
Raiders	1	3:14	H.Renfrow 12 yd. pass from D.Carr (D.Carlson kick) (6-23, 3:30)
Chargers	2	12:42	A.Ekeler 14 yd. run (D.Hopkins kick) (14-75, 5:32)
Chargers	2	1:52	A.Ekeler 14 yd. pass from J.Herbert (D.Hopkins kick) (13-90, 7:02)
Raiders	2	0:37	J.Jacobs 1 yd. run (D.Carlson kick) (7-75, 1:15)
Raiders	3	8:03	D.Carlson 31 yd. Field Goal (4-4, 0:49)
Raiders	4	14:14	H.Renfrow 2 yd. pass from D.Carr (pass failed) (13-83, 7:17)
Raiders	4	8:23	D.Carlson 52 yd. Field Goal (8-30, 4:32)
Chargers	4	4:28	J.Palmer 23 yd. pass from J.Herbert (J.Herbert-A.Ekeler pass) (14-75, 3:55)
Chargers	4	0:00	M.Williams 12 yd. pass from J.Herbert (D.Hopkins kick) (19-83, 2:06)
Raiders	OT	7:09	D.Carlson 40 yd. Field Goal (7-53, 2:51)
Chargers	OT	4:30	D.Hopkins 41 yd. Field Goal (8-52, 2:39)
Raiders	OT	0:00	D.Carlson 47 yd. Field Goal (8-46, 4:30)

TEAM STATISTICS

	LAC	LV
FIRST DOWNS:	27	25
TOTAL NET YARDS:	440	346
NET RUSHING YARDS:	85	174
NET PASSING YARDS:	355	172
PENALTIES/YARDS:	10-108	4-38
3RD DOWN EFFICIENCY (%):	4-18 (22.2%)	8-17 (47.1%)
SCORING DRIVES (%):	4-11 (45.4%)	8-13 (61.5%)
PUNTS/NET AVERAGE:	3-54.0	4-45.3
SACKS/YARDS:	3/18	3/28
FUMBLES/LOST:	1/1	2/0
POINTS OFF TURNOVERS:	0	10
AVG. DRIVE START:	OWN 22	OWN 37
TIME OF POSSESSION:	31:19	38:41

INDIVIDUAL TOP PERFORMERS



PASSING

	CMP	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	RT
J.Herbert	34	64	383	3	1	80.4
D.Carr	20	36	186	2	0	88.4
M.Mariota	1	1	4	0	0	83.3

RUSHING

	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
A.Ekeler	16	64	4.0	14	1
J.Herbert	3	20	6.7	11	0
J.Jacobs	26	132	5.1	28	1
J.Richard	2	24	12.0	23	0

RECEIVING

	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
M.Williams	9	119	13.2	47	1
J.Cook	4	80	20.0	42	0
K.Allen	6	52	8.7	14	0
J.Guyton	6	52	8.7	17	0
B.Edwards	4	63	15.8	30	0
F.Moreau	2	50	25.0	44	0
Z.Jones	5	27	5.4	11	0
D.Waller	2	22	11.0	18	0

TACKLES (SOLO) - LAC: N.Adderley 10 (7), D.James 9 (4), U.Nwosu 7 (6); **LV:** D.Perryman 9 (8), B.Facyson 7 (7), N.Hobbs 7 (5).

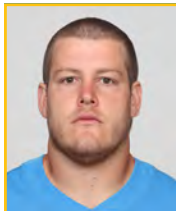
SACKS - LAC: J.Bosa 1-10, U.Nwosu 1-8, J.Jones 1-0; **LV:** M.Crosby 2-18, C.Ferrell 0.5-5, Q.Jefferson 0.5-5.

INTERCEPTIONS - LAC: None; **LV:** C.Hayward 1-0-0.

STARTERS

WR.....K.Allen	OLB.....J.Bosa	WR.....Z.Jones	DE.....Y.Ngakoue
LT.....R.Slater	DL.....J.Tillery	LT.....K.Miller	DT.....J.Hankins
LG.....M.Feiler	DL.....J.Jones	LG.....J.Simpson	DT....Q.Jefferson
C.....C.Linsley	OLB.....U.Nwosu	C.....A.James	DE.....M.Crosby
RG.....M.Schofield III	LB.....K.White	RG.....A.Leachwood	SLB.....D.Deablo
RT.....S.Norton	LB.....D.Tranquill	RT.....B.Parker	MLB..D.Perryman
TE.....S.Anderson	CB.....C.Harris Jr.	TE.....D.Waller	LB.....K.Wright
TE.....T.McKitty	CB.....M.Davis	TE.....F.Moreau	LCB...B.Facyson
WR.....M.Williams	CB..A.Samuel Jr.	WR....B.Edwards	RCB...C.Hayward
QB.....J.Herbert	S.....N.Adderley	QB.....D.Carr	FS.....T.Moehrig
RB.....A.Ekeler	S.....D.James Jr.	RB.....J.Jacobs	SS.....R.Teamer

SUPPLEMENTAL BIOS



CAMERON HUNT ⚡ 65

CENTER/GUARD | OREGON
6-4 | 305 lbs | CORONA, CALIF.
FREE AGENT — 2022
EXPERIENCE: 2ND NFL SEASON
1ST YEAR WITH CHARGERS

UNITED STATES FOOTBALL LEAGUE (2022): Named First-Team All-USFL after anchoring the offensive front of the USFL-champion Birmingham Stallions.

2019: Placed on Reserve/Injured following training camp, where he spent the entirety of the regular season.

2018: Signed by the Raiders and spent the offseason program and training camp with the club before being waived during final roster cuts...Re-signed by the Raiders prior to Week 15, contributing to the club over the final three weeks of the regular season.

2017: Signed by the Denver Broncos as an undrafted free agent following the 2017 NFL Draft...After spending training camp with Denver and ultimately being waived during final roster cuts, signed by the San Francisco 49ers to the club's practice squad prior to Week 9...Spent the remainder of the regular season on San Francisco's practice squad.

COLLEGE: Started 43-of-52 career outings at Oregon over four seasons (2013-16)...As a senior in 2016, started all 12 games at right guard, protecting true freshman QB Justin Herbert...Started 10-of-12 appearances as a junior in 2015, contributing to a unit that ranked fifth in the nation in both total offense and rushing offense...Helped lead Oregon to the inaugural College Football Playoff National Championship in 2014, starting 14 of the Ducks' 15 games as the offense ranked third in the nation in total offense and fourth in scoring offense...As a true freshman in 2013, ultimately started seven-of-13 outings to become the program's first true freshman to start a game on the offensive line in over 15 years.

PERSONAL: Given name is Cameron Hunt...Born in Corona, Calif. ...**High School:** Attended Centennial High School in Corona, Calif., where he was named Offensive Lineman of the Year by the *Los Angeles Times* and was named a second-team All-American by *USA Today*.

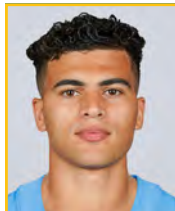
CAREER NFL TRANSACTIONS:

2017: Signed by Denver Broncos as undrafted free agent, May 12...Released by Broncos, Sept. 2...Signed by San Francisco 49ers to practice squad, Nov. 4.

2018: Released by 49ers, Jan. 8...Signed by Oakland Raiders, May 17...Released by Raiders, Sept. 1...Signed by Raiders, Dec. 11.

2019: Released by Raiders, April 30...Signed by Raiders, Aug. 17...Placed on Reserve/Injured, Sept. 1.

2022: Signed by Los Angeles Chargers as free agent, August 9.



SAGE SURRATT ⚡ 41

WIDE RECEIVER | WAKE FOREST
6-3 | 212 lbs | LINCOLNTOWN, N.C.
FREE AGENT — 2022
EXPERIENCE: 1ST NFL SEASON
1ST YEAR WITH CHARGERS

UNITED STATES FOOTBALL LEAGUE (2022): Spent portions of the season on the active roster of the USFL-champion Birmingham Stallions.

2020: Signed with the Detroit Lions as an undrafted free agent, spending the offseason and training camp with the clubs before being released during final roster cuts...Spent the first two weeks of the regular season on Detroit's practice squad, before being released by the club.

COLLEGE: In two seasons of action at Wake Forrest, starting 18-of-22 outings at Wake Forest (2018-19), totaled 107 receptions for 1,582 yards (14.8 avg.) and 15 touchdowns...A semifinalist for the Biletnikoff Award as a redshirt sophomore in 2019, earned first-team All-Atlantic Coast Conference honors after recording 11 touchdowns and 1,001 yards on 66 catches (15.2 avg.)...Opted out of the 2020 season prior to beginning his redshirt junior slate...Redshirted as a true freshman in 2019.

PERSONAL: Given name is Sage Surratt...Born in Lincolntown, N.C. ...Brother, Chazz, is a linebacker for the Minnesota Vikings...

High School: Attended Lincolntown H.S. in Lincolntown, N.C. ... On top of being valedictorian, was named North Carolina High School Player of the Year in both football and basketball in 2017...A two-time *Associated Press* first-team All-State selection, set state records with 366 career catches for 5,926 yards (16.2 avg.) and 80 touchdowns...On the hardwood, recoded seven 40-point games and three 50-point games, finishing his career as the state's No. 2 all-time scorer with 2,951 points.

CAREER NFL TRANSACTIONS:

2021: Signed by Detroit Lions as undrafted free agent, May 14... Released by Lions, Aug. 31...Signed by Lions to practice squad, Sept. 1...Released by Lions, Sept. 15.

2022: Signed by Los Angeles Chargers as free agent, July 31.

2022 LOS ANGELES CHARGERS NUMERICAL ROSTER

ACTIVE ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Age	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
1o	Brandon Peters	QB	6-4	228	24	R	Illinois	Avon, Ind.	FA-'22
1s	James McCourt	K	5-11	216	24	R	Illinois	Parkland, Fla.	FA-'22
2	Easton Stick	QB	6-1	224	26	4	North Dakota State	Omaha, Neb.	D5-'19
3	Derwin James Jr.	S	6-2	215	26	5	Florida State	Haines City, Fla.	D1-'18
4	Chase Daniel	QB	6-0	229	35	13	Missouri	Southlake, Texas	FA-'21
5	Joshua Palmer	WR	6-1	210	22	2	Tennessee	Brampton, Ontario, Canada	D3a-'21
6	Dustin Hopkins	K	6-2	193	31	9	Florida State	Austin, Texas	FA-'21
7	Gerald Everett	TE	6-3	240	28	6	South Alabama	Atlanta, Ga.	UFA (Sea)-'22
8	Kyle Van Noy	OLB	6-3	250	31	9	Brigham Young	Reno, Nev.	FA-'22
10	Justin Herbert	QB	6-6	236	24	3	Oregon	Eugene, Ore.	D1a-'20
11	Jason Moore Jr.	WR	6-3	215	27	2	Findlay	Oberlin, Ohio	FA-'19
12	Joe Reed	WR	6-0	224	24	2	Virginia	Charlotte Court House, Va.	D5-'20
13	Keenan Allen	WR	6-2	211	30	10	California	Greensboro, N.C.	D3-'13
15	Jalen Guyton	WR	6-1	212	25	3	North Texas	Allen, Texas	FA-'19
16	JK Scott	P	6-5	208	26	4	Alabama	Denver, Colo.	FA-'22
20	Tevaughn Campbell	CB	6-0	200	29	3	Regina	Toronto, Ontario, Canada	FA-'19
22	JT Woods	S	6-2	193	22	R	Baylor	San Antonio, Texas	D3-'22
23	Bryce Callahan	CB	5-9	188	30	8	Rice	Moscow, Idaho	FA-'22
24	Nasir Adderley	S	6-0	206	25	4	Delaware	Philadelphia, Pa.	D2-'19
25	Joshua Kelley	RB	5-11	212	24	3	UCLA	Lancaster, Calif.	D4-'20
26	Asante Samuel Jr.	CB	5-10	180	22	2	Florida State	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	D2-'21
27	J.C. Jackson	CB	6-1	198	26	5	Maryland	Immokalee, Fla.	UFA (NE)-'22
28	Isaiah Spiller	RB	6-1	215	21	R	Texas A&M	Spring, Texas	D4-'22
29	Mark Webb Jr.	DB	6-1	207	23	2	Georgia	Philadelphia, Pa.	D7-'21
30	Austin Ekeler	RB	5-10	200	27	6	Western State Colorado	Eaton, Colo.	FA-'17
31	Nick Niemann	LB	6-3	234	24	2	Iowa	Sycamore, Ill.	D6a-'21
32	Alohi Gilman	S	5-10	201	24	3	Notre Dame	Laie, Hawaii	D6-'20
33	Deane Leonard	DB	6-0	195	22	R	Mississippi	Calgary, Alberta, Canada	D7a-'22
34	Larry Rountree III	RB	5-10	211	23	2	Missouri	Raleigh, N.C.	D6b-'21
35	Leddie Brown	RB	6-0	213	23	R	West Virginia	Philadelphia, Pa.	FA-'22
36	Ja'Sir Taylor	DB	5-10	185	23	R	Wake Forest	Asbury Park, N.J.	D6b-'22
37	Kernon Hall	CB	5-11	190	25	2	North Texas	Calhoun City, Miss.	W (Dal)-'21
38	Brandon Sebastian	CB	6-5	245	23	R	Boston College	West Haven, Conn.	FA-'22
39	Kevin Marks Jr.	RB	5-11	200	24	R	Buffalo	Norfolk, Va.	FA-'22
40	Gabe Nabers	FB	6-3	235	24	3	Florida State	Hahira, Ga.	FA-'20
41d	Raheem Layne	S	5-11	192	23	R	Indiana	Deland, Fla.	FA-'22
41o	Sage Surratt	TE	6-3	215	24	1	Wake Forest	Lincolnton, N.C.	FA-'22
42	Troy Reeder	LB	6-3	245	27	4	Delaware	Wilmington, Del.	FA-'22
43	Michael Davis	CB	6-2	196	27	6	Brigham Young	Glendale, Calif.	FA-'17
44	Jamal Davis II	OLB	6-3	245	27	1	Akron	Canton, Ohio	FA-'22
45	Zander Horvath	FB	6-3	230	23	R	Purdue	Mishawaka, Ind.	D7b-'22
46	Ben DeLuca	DB	6-1	202	24	1	Charlotte	Orlando, Fla.	FA-'21
47	Josh Harris	LS	6-1	224	33	11	Auburn	Carrollton, Ga.	UFA (Atl)-'22
48d	Skyler Thomas	S	5-8	184	24	R	Liberty	Riverside, Calif.	FA-'22
49	Drue Tranquill	LB	6-2	234	26	4	Notre Dame	Fort Wayne, Ind.	D4-'19
50	Cole Christiansen	LB	6-1	230	25	1	Army	Suffolk, Va.	FA-'20
51	Emeke Egbule	OLB	6-2	245	25	3	Houston	Houston, Texas	D6-'19
52	Khalil Mack	LB	6-3	269	31	9	Buffalo	Fort Pierce, Fla.	T (Chi)-'22
53	Damon Lloyd	OLB	6-0	235	24	2	Indiana (Pa.)	Avingdon, Md.	FA-'21
54	Carlo Kemp	OLB	6-3	281	24	1	Michigan	Boulder, Colo.	FA-'22
56	Morgan Fox	DL	6-3	275	27	6	Colorado State-Pueblo	Fountain, Colo.	FA-'22
57	Amen Ogbongbemiga	LB	6-0	231	23	2	Oklahoma State	Calgary, Alberta, Canada	FA-'21
58	Tyreek Maddox-Williams	LB	6-0	228	24	R	Rutgers	Philadelphia, Pa.	FA-'22
59	Ty Shelby	OLB	6-3	249	23	R	Louisiana-Monroe	Houston, Texas	FA-'22
60	Isaac Weaver	C	6-6	310	24	R	Old Dominion	Marietta, Ga.	FA-'22
63	Corey Linsley	G	6-3	301	31	9	Ohio State	Boardman, Ohio	UFA (GB)-'21
64	Brenden Jaimes	G/T	6-5	300	23	2	Nebraska	Austin, Texas	D5-'21
65	Cameron Hunt	C/G	6-4	305	27	2	Oregon	Corona, Calif.	FA-'22
67	Ryan Hunter	G	6-3	316	27	1	Bowling Green	North Bay, Ontario, Canada	FA-'20
68	Jamaree Salyer	G	6-4	325	22	R	Georgia	Atlanta, Ga.	D6a-'22
69	Sebastian Joseph-Day	DL	6-4	310	27	5	Rutgers	Stroudsburg, Pa.	UFA (LAR)-'22
70	Rashawn Slater	T	6-4	315	23	2	Northwestern	Sugar Land, Texas	D1-'21
71	Matt Feiler	G	6-6	330	30	6	Bloomsburg	Strasburg, Pa.	UFA (Pit)-'21
73	Foster Sarell	T	6-6	322	23	1	Stanford	Tacoma, Wash.	FA-'21
74	Storm Norton	T	6-7	317	28	3	Toledo	Toledo, Ohio	FA-'20
76	Will Clapp	C/G	6-5	311	26	5	Louisiana State	New Orleans, La.	FA-'22
77	Zion Johnson	G	6-3	316	22	R	Boston College	Bowie, Md.	D1-'22
78	Zack Bailey	T	6-5	300	26	2	South Carolina	Summerville, S.C.	W (Was)-'22
79	Trey Pipkins III	T	6-6	307	25	4	Sioux Falls	Apple Valley, Minn.	D3-'19
80	Maurice Ffrench	WR	5-11	200	24	1	Pittsburgh	New Brunswick, N.J.	FA-'21
81	Mike Williams	WR	6-4	218	27	6	Clemson	Santee, S.C.	D1-'17
82	DeAndre Carter	WR	5-8	190	29	5	Sacramento State	San Jose, Calif.	UFA (Was)-'22
83	Michael Bandy	WR	5-10	190	24	1	San Diego	La Mirada, Calif.	FA-'21
84	Erik Krommenhoek	TE	6-5	245	23	R	Southern California	Danville, Calif.	FA-'22
86	Trevon Bradford	WR	5-9	183	24	R	Oregon State	Portland, Ore.	FA-'22
87	Hunter Kampmoyer	TE	6-4	243	24	1	Oregon	Bishop, Calif.	FA-'21
88	Tre' McKitty	TE	6-4	246	23	2	Georgia	Wesley Chapel, Fla.	D3b-'21
89	Donald Parham Jr.	TE	6-8	237	24	3	Stetson	Lakeland, Fla.	FA-'20
90	Andrew Brown	DL	6-3	290	26	3	Virginia	Chesapeake, Va.	FA-'21
91	Forrest Merrill	DL	6-0	322	25	1	Arkansas State	Willard, Mo.	FA-'21
92	Joe Gaziano	DL	6-4	280	25	2	Northwestern	Scituate, Mass.	FA-'20
93	Otito Ogbonnia	DL	6-4	320	21	R	UCLA	Houston, Texas	D5-'22
94	Chris Rumph II	OLB	6-2	244	23	2	Duke	Gainesville, Fla.	D4-'21
95	Christian Covington	DL	6-2	300	28	8	Rice	Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada	FA-'21
96	Breiden Fehoko	DL	6-3	300	25	2	Louisiana State	Honolulu, Hawaii	FA-'20
97	Joey Bosa	OLB	6-5	280	27	7	Ohio State	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	D1-'16
98	Austin Johnson	DL	6-4	314	28	7	Penn State	Galloway, N.J.	UFA (NYG)-'22
99	Jerry Tillery	DL	6-6	295	25	4	Notre Dame	Shreveport, La.	D1-'19

ACTIVE/NON-FOOTBALL INJURY

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Age	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
48o	Stone Smartt	TE	6-4	226	23	R	Old Dominion	Sacramento, Calif.	FA-'22

ACTIVE/PHYSICALLY UNABLE TO PERFORM

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Age	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
9	Kenneth Murray Jr.	LB	6-2	241	23	3	Oklahoma	Houston, Texas	D1b-'20

2022 LOS ANGELES CHARGERS ALPHABETICAL ROSTER

ACTIVE ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	DOB	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
24	Adderley, Nasir	S	6-0	206	5/31/97	4	Delaware	Philadelphia, Pa.	D2-'19
13	Allen, Keenan	WR	6-2	211	4/27/92	10	California	Greensboro, N.C.	D3-'13
78	Bailey, Zack	T	6-5	300	11/8/95	2	South Carolina	Summerville, S.C.	W (Was)-'22
83	Bandy, Michael	WR	5-10	190	12/5/97	1	San Diego	La Mirada, Calif.	FA-'21
97	Bosa, Joey	OLB	6-5	280	7/11/95	7	Ohio State	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	D1-'16
86	Bradford, Trevon	WR	5-9	183	12/18/97	R	Oregon State	Portland, Ore.	FA-'22
90	Brown, Andrew	DL	6-3	290	12/30/95	3	Virginia	Chesapeake, Va.	FA-'21
35	Brown, Leddie	RB	6-0	213	2/28/99	R	West Virginia	Philadelphia, Pa.	FA-'22
23	Callahan, Bryce	CB	5-9	188	10/23/91	8	Rice	Moscow, Idaho	FA-'22
20	Campbell, Tevaughn	CB	6-0	200	6/14/93	3	Regina	Toronto, Ontario, Canada	FA-'19
82	Carter, DeAndre	WR	5-8	190	4/10/93	5	Sacramento State	San Jose, Calif.	UFA (Was)-'22
50	Christiansen, Cole	LB	6-1	230	7/30/97	1	Army	Suffolk, Va.	FA-'20
76	Clapp, Will	C/G	6-5	311	12/10/95	5	Louisiana State	New Orleans, La.	FA-'22
95	Covington, Christian	DL	6-2	300	10/16/93	8	Rice	Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada	FA-'21
4	Daniel, Chase	QB	6-0	229	10/7/86	13	Missouri	Southlake, Texas	FA-'21
44	Davis II, Jamal	OLB	6-3	245	7/9/95	1	Akron	Canton, Ohio	FA-'22
43	Davis, Michael	CB	6-2	196	1/6/95	6	Brigham Young	Glendale, Calif.	FA-'17
46	DeLuca, Ben	DB	6-1	202	4/9/98	1	Charlotte	Orlando, Fla.	FA-'21
51	Egbule, Emeke	OLB	6-2	245	10/13/96	3	Houston	Houston, Texas	D6-'19
30	Ekeler, Austin	RB	5-10	200	5/17/95	6	Western State Colorado	Eaton, Colo.	FA-'17
7	Everett, Gerald	TE	6-3	240	6/25/94	6	South Alabama	Atlanta, Ga.	UFA (Sea)-'22
96	Fehoko, Breiden	DL	6-3	300	10/15/96	2	Louisiana State	Honolulu, Hawaii	FA-'20
71	Feller, Matt	G	6-6	330	7/7/92	6	Bloomsburg	Strasburg, Pa.	UFA (Pit)-'21
80	Ffrench, Maurice	WR	5-11	200	1/1/98	1	Pittsburgh	New Brunswick, N.J.	FA-'21
56	Fox, Morgan	DL	6-3	275	9/12/94	6	Colorado State-Pueblo	Fountain, Colo.	FA-'22
92	Gaziano, Joe	DL	6-4	280	9/27/96	2	Northwestern	Scituate, Mass.	FA-'20
32	Gilman, Alohi	S	5-10	201	9/17/97	3	Notre Dame	Laie, Hawaii	D6-'20
15	Guyton, Jalen	WR	6-1	212	6/7/97	3	North Texas	Allen, Texas	FA-'19
37	Hall, Kemon	CB	5-11	190	6/2/97	2	North Texas	Calhoun City, Miss.	W (Dal)-'21
47	Harris, Josh	LS	6-1	224	4/27/89	11	Auburn	Carrollton, Ga.	UFA (Atl)-'22
10	Herbert, Justin	QB	6-6	236	3/10/98	3	Oregon	Eugene, Ore.	D1a-'20
6	Hopkins, Dustin	K	6-2	193	10/1/90	9	Florida State	Austin, Texas	FA-'21
45	Horvath, Zander	FB	6-3	230	12/10/98	R	Purdue	Mishawaka, Ind.	D7b-'22
65	Hunt, Cameron	C/G	6-4	305	12/17/94	2	Oregon	Corona, Calif.	FA-'22
67	Hunter, Ryan	G	6-3	316	4/1/95	1	Bowling Green	North Bay, Ontario, Canada	FA-'20
27	Jackson, J.C.	CB	6-1	198	11/17/95	5	Maryland	Immokalee, Fla.	UFA (NE)-'22
64	Jaimes, Brenden	G/T	6-5	300	5/28/99	2	Nebraska	Austin, Texas	D5-'21
3	James Jr., Derwin	S	6-2	215	8/3/96	5	Florida State	Haines City, Fla.	D1-'18
98	Johnson, Austin	DL	6-4	314	5/8/94	7	Penn State	Galloway, N.J.	UFA (NYG)-'22
77	Johnson, Zion	G	6-3	316	11/18/99	R	Boston College	Bowie, Md.	D1-'22
69	Joseph-Day, Sebastian	DL	6-4	310	3/21/95	5	Rutgers	Stroudsburg, Pa.	UFA (LAR)-'22
87	Kampmoyer, Hunter	TE	6-4	243	2/6/98	1	Oregon	Bishop, Calif.	FA-'21
25	Kelley, Joshua	RB	5-11	212	11/20/97	3	UCLA	Lancaster, Calif.	D4-'20
54	Kemp, Carlo	OLB	6-3	281	1/1/98	1	Michigan	Boulder, Colo.	FA-'22
84	Krommenhoek, Erik	TE	6-5	245	11/12/98	R	Southern California	Danville, Calif.	FA-'22
41d	Layne, Raheem	S	5-11	192	7/2/99	R	Indiana	Deland, Fla.	FA-'22
33	Leonard, Deane	DB	6-0	195	11/20/99	R	Mississippi	Calgary, Alberta, Canada	D7a-'22
63	Linsley, Corey	C	6-3	301	7/27/91	9	Ohio State	Boardman, Ohio	UFA (GB)-'21
53	Lloyd, Damon	LB	6-0	235	5/8/98	2	Indiana (Pa.)	Avington, Md.	FA-'21
52	Mack, Khalil	OLB	6-3	269	2/22/91	9	Buffalo	Fort Pierce, Fla.	T (Chi)-'22
58	Maddox-Williams, Tyreek	LB	6-0	228	10/28/97	R	Rutgers	Philadelphia, Pa.	FA-'22
39	Marks Jr., Kevin	RB	5-11	200	3/31/98	R	Buffalo	Norfolk, Va.	FA-'22
1s	McCourt, James	K	5-11	216	11/9/97	R	Illinois	Parkland, Fla.	FA-'22
88	McKitty, Tre'	TE	6-4	246	1/12/99	2	Georgia	Wesley Chapel, Fla.	D3b-'21
91	Merrill, Forrest	DL	6-0	322	8/15/96	1	Arkansas State	Willard, Mo.	FA-'21
11	Moore Jr., Jason	WR	6-3	215	6/23/95	2	Findlay	Oberlin, Ohio	FA-'19
40	Nabers, Gabe	FB	6-3	235	11/5/97	3	Florida State	Hahira, Ga.	FA-'20
31	Niemann, Nick	LB	6-3	244	12/2/97	2	Iowa	Sycamore, Ill.	D6a-'21
74	Norton, Storm	T	6-7	317	5/16/94	3	Toledo	Toledo, Ohio	FA-'20
57	Ogbongbemiga, Amen	DL	6-0	231	9/4/98	2	Oklahoma State	Calgary, Alberta, Canada	FA-'21
93	Ogbonnia, Otitio	DL	6-4	320	8/25/00	R	UCLA	Houston, Texas	D5-'22
5	Palmer, Joshua	WR	6-1	210	9/22/99	2	Tennessee	Brampton, Ontario, Canada	D3a-'21
89	Parham Jr., Donald	TE	6-8	237	8/16/97	3	Stetson	Lakeland, Fla.	FA-'20
1o	Peters, Brandon	QB	6-4	228	10/15/97	R	Illinois	Avon, Ind.	FA-'22
79	Pipkins III, Trey	T	6-6	307	9/5/96	4	Sioux Falls	Apple Valley, Minn.	D3-'19
12	Reed, Joe	WR	6-0	224	1/4/98	2	Virginia	Charlotte Court House, Va.	D5-'20
42	Reeder, Troy	LB	6-3	245	9/13/94	4	Delaware	Wilmington, Del.	FA-'22
34	Rountree III, Larry	RB	5-10	211	2/13/99	2	Missouri	Raleigh, N.C.	D6b-'21
94	Rumph II, Chris	OLB	6-2	244	10/19/98	2	Duke	Gainesville, Fla.	D4-'21
68	Salyer, Jamaree	G	6-4	325	7/13/00	R	Georgia	Atlanta, Ga.	D6a-'22
26	Samuel Jr., Asante	CB	5-10	180	10/3/99	2	Florida State	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	D2-'21
73	Sarell, Foster	T	6-6	322	8/28/98	1	Stanford	Tacoma, Wash.	FA-'21
16	Scott, JK	P	6-5	208	10/30/95	4	Alabama	Denver, Colo.	FA-'22
38	Sebastian, Brandon	CB	6-5	245	3/5/99	R	Boston College	West Haven, Conn.	FA-'22
59	Shelby, Ty	OLB	6-3	249	10/14/98	R	Louisiana-Monroe	Houston, Texas	FA-'22
70	Slater, Rashawn	T	6-4	315	3/26/99	2	Northwestern	Sugar Land, Texas	D1-'21
28	Spiller, Isaiah	RB	6-1	215	8/9/01	R	Texas A&M	Spring, Texas	D4-'22
2	Stick, Easton	QB	6-1	224	9/15/95	4	North Dakota State	Omaha, Neb.	D5-'19
41o	Surratt, Sage	TE	6-3	215	4/13/98	1	Wake Forest	Lincolnton, N.C.	FA-'22
36	Taylor, Ja'Sir	DB	5-10	185	1/8/99	R	Wake Forest	Asbury Park, N.J.	D6b-'22
48d	Thomas, Skyler	S	5-8	184	4/8/98	R	Liberty	Riverside, Calif.	FA-'22
99	Tillery, Jerry	DL	6-6	295	10/8/96	4	Notre Dame	Shreveport, La.	D1-'19
49	Tranquill, Drue	LB	6-2	234	8/15/95	4	Notre Dame	Fort Wayne, Ind.	D4-'19
8	Van Noy, Kyle	OLB	6-3	250	3/26/91	9	Brigham Young	Reno, Nev.	FA-'22
60	Weaver, Isaac	C	6-6	310	2/14/98	R	Old Dominion	Marietta, Ga.	FA-'22
29	Webb Jr., Mark	DB	6-1	207	9/10/98	2	Georgia	Philadelphia, Pa.	D7-'21
81	Williams, Mike	WR	6-4	218	10/4/94	6	Clemson	Santee, S.C.	D1-'17
22	Woods, JT	S	6-2	193	6/10/00	R	Baylor	San Antonio, Texas	D3-'22

ACTIVE/NON-FOOTBALL INJURY

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	DOB	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
48o	Smartt, Stone	TE	6-4	226	10/4/98	R	Old Dominion	Sacramento, Calif.	FA-'22

ACTIVE/PHYSICALLY UNABLE TO PERFORM

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	DOB	Exp.	College	Hometown	How Acq.
9	Murray Jr., Kenneth	LB	6-2	241	11/16/98	3	Oklahoma	Houston, Texas	D1b-'20

2022 LOS ANGELES CHARGERS DEPTH CHART

Depth Chart is unofficial and compiled by Chargers Communications

OFFENSE

WR	13	Keenan Allen	5	Joshua Palmer	82	DeAndre Carter	83	Michael Bandy	
					80	Maurice Ffrench	86	<u>Trevon Bradford</u>	
LT	70	Rashawn Slater	73	Foster Sarell	78	Zack Bailey			
LG	71	Matt Feiler	68	<u>Jamaree Salyer</u>	65	Cameron Hunt			
C	63	Corey Linsley	76	Will Clapp	60	<u>Isaac Weaver</u>			
RG	<u>77</u>	<u>Zion Johnson</u>	64	Brenden Jaimes	67	Ryan Hunter			
RT	74	Storm Norton	—OR—	79	Trey Pipkins III	78	Zack Bailey		
TE	7	Gerald Everett	89	Donald Parham Jr.	88	Tre' McKitty	87	Hunter Kampmoyer	
					84	<u>Erik Krommenhoek</u>	41	Sage Surratt	
WR	81	Mike Williams	15	Jalen Guyton	11	Jason Moore Jr.	12	Joe Reed	
QB	10	Justin Herbert	4	Chase Daniel	—OR—	2	Easton Stick	1	<u>Brandon Peters</u>
FB	<u>45</u>	<u>Zander Horvath</u>	—OR—	40	Gabe Nabers	88	Tre' McKitty		
RB	30	Austin Ekeler	25	Joshua Kelley	34	Larry Rountree III	28	<u>Isaiah Spiller</u>	
					39	<u>Kevin Marks Jr.</u>	35	<u>Leddie Brown</u>	

DEFENSE

EDGE	97	Joey Bosa	8	Kyle Van Noy	51	Emeke Egbule	59	<u>Ty Shelby</u>
DL	99	Jerry Tillery	56	Morgan Fox	92	Joe Gaziano		
DL	98	Austin Johnson	95	Christian Covington	96	Breiden Fehoko	91	Forrest Merrill
DL	69	Sebastian Joseph-Day	<u>93</u>	<u>Otito Ogbonnia</u>	90	Andrew Brown		
EDGE	52	Khalil Mack	94	Chris Rumph II	44	Jamal Davis II		
LB	8	Kyle Van Noy	42	Troy Reeder	57	Amen Ogbongbemiga	58	<u>Tyreek Maddox-Williams</u>
LB	49	Drue Tranquill	31	Nick Niemann	50	Cole Christiansen	53	Damon Lloyd
CB	27	J.C. Jackson	43	Michael Davis	20	Tevaughn Campbell	38	<u>Brandon Sebastian</u>
S	24	Nasir Adderley	29	Mark Webb Jr.	<u>22</u>	<u>JT Woods</u>	33	<u>Deane Leonard</u>
S	3	Derwin James Jr.	32	Alohi Gilman	46	Ben DeLuca	41	<u>Raheem Layne</u>
							48	<u>Skyler Thomas</u>
CB	26	Asante Samuel Jr.	23	Bryce Callahan	37	Kemon Hall	36	<u>Ja'Sir Taylor</u>

SPECIALISTS

K	6	Dustin Hopkins	1	<u>James McCourt</u>				
P	16	JK Scott						
KO	6	Dustin Hopkins	1	<u>James McCourt</u>				
H	16	JK Scott						
LS	47	Josh Harris						
KR	82	DeAndre Carter	83	Michael Bandy	12	Joe Reed	36	<u>Ja'Sir Taylor</u>
PR	82	DeAndre Carter	83	Michael Bandy	23	Bryce Callahan	36	<u>Ja'Sir Taylor</u>

NOTE: Rookies are underlined; Players on Non-Football Injury and Physically Unable to Perform are not listed

2022 LOS ANGELES CHARGERS PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Nasir Adderley nah-SEER ADD-er-lee
Tevaughn Campbell tuh-VAUGHN
Emeke Egbule eh-MEH-keh egg-BOO-leh
Austin Ekeler ECK-ler
Breiden FehokoBRAY-dun fuh-HO-ko
Matt Feiler FEYE-luhr
Alohi Gilman uh-LOW-hee

Kemon Hall KEY-mahn
Zander HorvathHOR-voth
Brenden Jaimes HIGH-miss
Zion Johnson ZEYE-uhn
Nick Niemann KNEE-min
Amen Ogbongbemiga
 AY-men awg-BONG-buh-mee-guh

Otito Ogbonnia oh-TEET-oh oh-BONE-yuh
Donald Parham Jr. par-HAM
Jamaree Salyer SAL-yur
Rashawn Slaterruh-SHAWN
Ja'Sir Taylor JAH-sear

2022 TRANSACTIONS BY DATE

Jan. 11	Signed WR Michael Bandy, DL Andrew Brown, LB Cole Christiansen, DB Ben DeLuca, OLB Emeke Egbule, WR Maurice Ffrench, G Ryan Hunter, TE Hunter Kampmoyer, DL Forrest Merrill, WR Jason Moore Jr., and T Foster Sarell to Reserve/Future contracts.	March 21	Signed LS Josh Harris and P JK Scott.	June 10	Signed RB Isaiah Spiller.
Jan. 18	Signed WR Joe Reed to Reserve/Future contract.	March 22	Signed TE Gerald Everett.	June 13	Signed S JT Woods.
Feb. 2	Signed OLB Jamal Davis II to Reserve/Future contract.	April 11	Signed WR DeAndre Carter.	July 19	Declared Non-Football Injury for TE Stone Smartt.
March 8	Signed WR Mike Williams to contract extension.	April 12	Signed LB Troy Reeder. Re-signed WR Jalen Guyton and TE Donald Parham Jr.	July 26	Declared LB Kenneth Murray Jr., Physically Unable to Perform.
March 15	Extended exclusive rights tenders to WR Jalen Guyton, T Storm Norton and TE Donald Parham Jr. Released T Bryan Bulaga.	April 18	Re-signed T Storm Norton.	July 31	Signed TE Sage Surratt.
March 16	Traded 2022 second-round selection and 2023 sixth-round selection to Chicago for OLB Khalil Mack.	April 26	Signed C/G Will Clapp.	Aug. 9	Signed C/G Cameron Hunt. Waived/Injured T Andrew Trainer.
March 17	Signed DL Sebastian Joseph-Day.	April 30	Traded two 2022 seventh-round selections to Chicago for 2023 sixth-round selection.		
March 18	Signed CB J.C. Jackson and DL Austin Johnson. Re-signed DL Christian Covington and QB Chase Daniel.	May 5	Signed CB Bryce Callahan and OLB Kyle Van Noy.		
		May 13	Signed WR Trevon Bradford, RB Leddie Brown, FB Zander Horvath, TE Erik Krommenhoek, S Raheem Layne, DB Deane Leonard, LB Tyreek Maddox-Williams, RB Kevin Marks Jr., K James McCourt, DL Otito Ogbornia, QB Brandon Peters, G Jamaree Salyer, CB Brandon Sebastian, OLB Ty Shelby, TE Stone Smartt, DB Ja'Sir Taylor, S Skyler Thomas, T Andrew Trainer and C Isaac Weaver.		
		May 17	Claimed T Zack Bailey off waivers.		
		May 18	Signed DL Morgan Fox.		
		May 31	Signed G Zion Johnson.		

2022 TRANSACTIONS BY PLAYER

Bandy, Michael — WR

Jan. 11 Signed to Reserve/Future contract

Bradford, Trevon — WR

May 13 Signed

Brown, Andrew — DL

Jan. 11 Signed to Reserve/Future contract

Brown, Leddie — RB

May 13 Signed

Bulaga, Bryan — T

March 15 Released

Callahan, Bryce — CB

May 5 Signed

Carter, DeAndre — WR

April 11 Signed

Christiansen, Cole — LB

Jan. 11 Signed to Reserve/Future contract

Clapp, Will — C/G

April 26 Signed

Covington, Christian — DL

March 18 Re-signed

Daniel, Chase — QB

March 18 Re-signed

Davis II, Jamal — OLB

Jan. 11 Signed to Reserve/Future contract

DeLuca, Ben — DB

Jan. 11 Signed to Reserve/Future contract

Egbule, Emeke — OLB

Jan. 11 Signed to Reserve/Future contract

Everett, Gerald — TE

April 22 Signed

Ffrench, Maurice — WR

Jan. 11 Signed to Reserve/Future contract

Guyton, Jalen — WR

Jan. 11 Extended exclusive rights tender

April 12 Re-signed

Harris, Josh — LS

March 21 Signed

Horvath, Zander — FB

May 13 Signed

Hunt, Cameron — C/G

Aug. 9 Signed

Hunter, Ryan — G

Jan. 11 Signed to Reserve/Future contract

Jackson, J.C. — CB

March 18 Signed

Joseph-Day, Sebastian — DL

March 17 Signed

Johnson, Austin — DL

March 18 Signed

Kampmoyer, Hunter — TE

Jan. 11 Signed to Reserve/Future contract

Krommenhoek, Erik — TE

May 13 Signed

Layne, Raheem — S

May 13 Signed

Leonard, Deane — DB

May 13 Signed

Mack, Khalil — OLB

March 16 Signed

Maddox-Williams, Tyreek — LB

May 13 Signed

Marks Jr., Kevin — RB

May 13 Signed

McCourt, James — K

May 13 Signed

Merrill, Forrest — DL

Jan. 11 Signed to Reserve/Future contract

Moore Jr., Jason — WR

Jan. 11 Signed to Reserve/Future contract

Murray Jr., Kenneth — LB

July 26 Declared Physically Unable to Perform

Norton, Storm — T

March 11 Extended exclusive rights tender

April 18 Re-signed

Ogbonnia, Otito — DL

May 13 Signed

Parham Jr., Donald — TE

March 11 Extended exclusive rights tender

April 12 Re-signed

Peters, Brandon — QB

May 13 Signed

Reed, Joe — WR

Jan. 18 Signed to Reserve/Future contract

Reeder, Troy — LB

April 12 Signed

Salyer, Jamaree — G

May 13 Signed

Sarell, Foster — T

Jan. 11 Signed to Reserve/Future contract

Scott, JK — P

March 21 Signed

Sebastian, Brandon — CB

May 13 Signed

Shelby, Ty — OLB

May 13 Signed

Smartt, Stone — TE

May 13 Signed

July 19 Declared Non-Football Injury

Spiller, Isaiah — RB

June 10 Signed

Surratt, Sage — TE

July 31 Signed

Taylor, Ja'Sir — DB

May 13 Signed

Thomas, Skyler — S

May 13 Signed

Trainer, Andrew — T

May 13 Signed

Aug. 9 Waived/Injured

Van Noy, Kyle — OLB

May 5 Signed

Weaver, Isaac — C

May 13 Signed

Williams, Mike — WR

May 8 Signed

Woods, JT — W

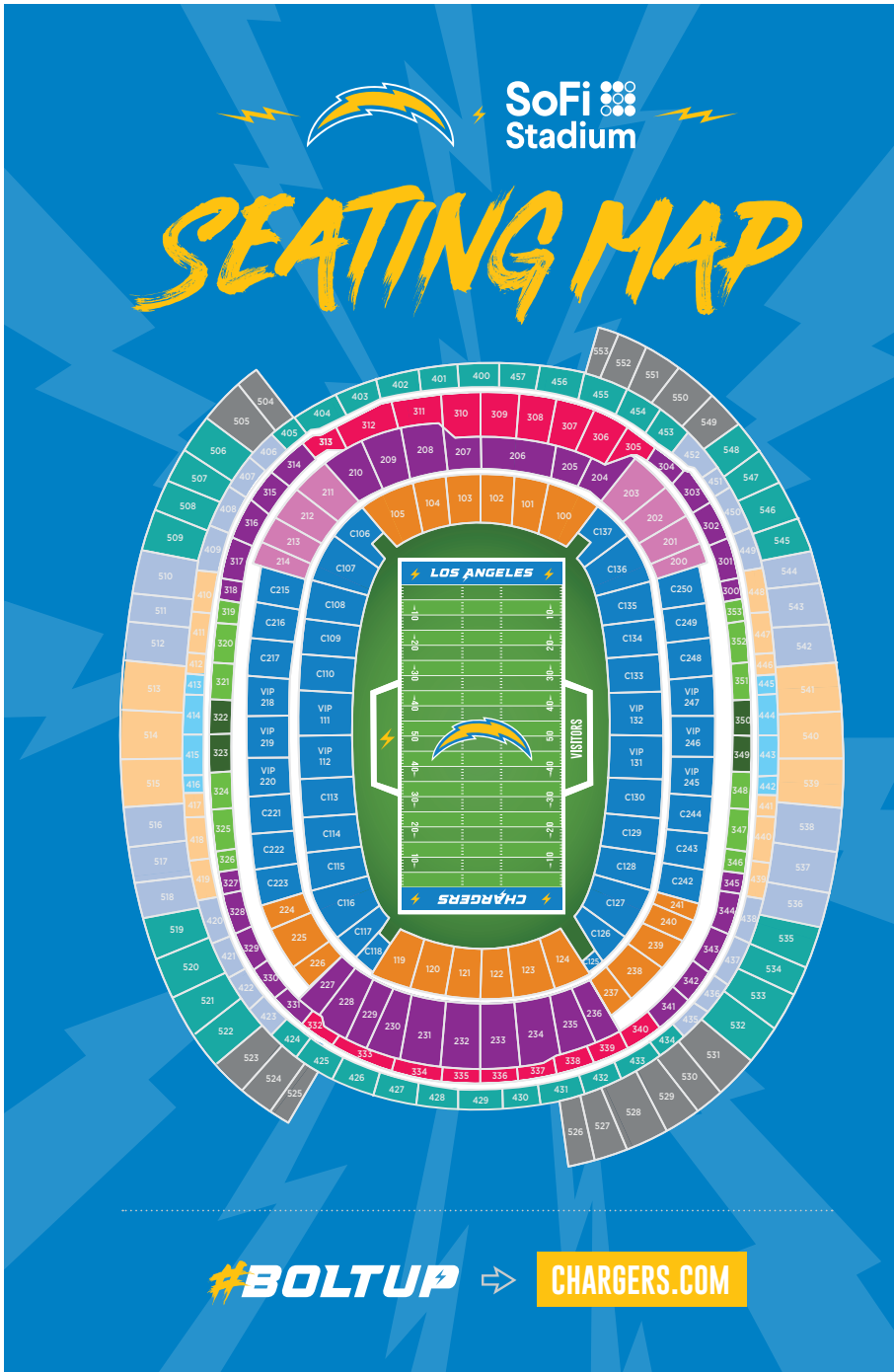
June 13 Signed

2022 LOS ANGELES CHARGERS COACHES

Head Coach	Brandon Staley
Special Teams Coordinator	Ryan Ficken
Defensive Coordinator	Renaldo Hill
Offensive Coordinator	Joe Lombardi
Secondary	Derrick Ansley
Pass Game Specialist	Tom Arth
Wide Receivers	Chris Beatty
Passing Game Coordinator/Quarterbacks	Shane Day
Assistant Secondary	Tom Donatell
Running Backs	Derrick Foster
Assistant Special Teams	Chris Gould
Offensive Assistant	Mike Hiestand
Tight Ends	Kevin Koger

Offensive Line	Brendan Nugent
Run Game Coordinator/Defensive Line	Jay Rodgers
Assistant Offensive Line	Shaun Sarrett
Defensive Quality Control	Isaac Shewmaker
Outside Linebackers	Giff Smith
Defensive Assistant	John Timu
Offensive Assistant	Pat White
Offensive Quality Control	Chandler Whitmer
Linebackers	Michael Wilhoite
Special Assistant to the Head Coach	Cody Cejda
Director of Sports Performance	Anthony Lomando
Head Strength & Conditioning	Jonathan Brooks
Assistant Strength & Conditioning	Lucius Jordan

MEDIA INFORMATION



GAME-DAY MEDIA PARKING: Media attending Chargers home games have been assigned reserved areas to park at SoFi Stadium. Media will park in Lot E of SoFi Stadium. All parking will be distributed electronically. As a reminder, parking is limited and is being provided as a courtesy.

MEDIA ENTRANCE: All credentialed media must enter through southeast media gate between entries 10 & 11 near Media Will Call and are subject to search procedures. Please be prepared to open all cases and bags for inspection by SoFi Stadium security personnel. All items will be inspected and tagged for security purposes. Please make sure bags are identifiable and limit carry-in items to only what is necessary. Please remove any security tags from prior games.

PRESS WILL CALL
Press Will Call is located at the southeast media gate between entries 10 & 11.

PRESS BOX
Media can access the press box by entering SoFi Stadium through the southeast media gate. Once on the concourse, turn left and walk along the concourse around the South end zone until reaching elevators in the southwest corner of the stadium. Take the elevators up to level 7 to access the press box.


CHARGERS MEDIA SITE
Chargers.com/media is available to assist media with coverage leading up to each game of the 2021 season. The media site contains digital copies of all press materials. Credential requests on the site must be submitted by the sports director, sports editor or photo editor to be considered.

CHARGERS GAME RELEASE
Stats and notes in Los Angeles Chargers Game Releases are found utilizing a variety of sources, including STATS LLC, Sportradar, Stathead and the Elias Sports Bureau.

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS COMMUNICATIONS CONTACTS

NAME	TITLE	DESK PHONE	EMAIL
Josh Rupprecht	Senior Vice President, Communications & External Affairs	657.356.2190	Josh.Rupprecht@Chargers.NFL.com
Jennifer Rojas	Vice President, Marketing Communications & Alumni Affairs	657.356.2162	Jennifer.Rojas@Chargers.NFL.com
Jamaal LaFrance	Senior Manager, Football Communications	657.356.2063	Jamaal.LaFrance@Chargers.NFL.com
Brock Anderson	Manager, Football Communications	657.356.2082	Brock.Anderson@Chargers.NFL.com
Danny Markino	Senior Coordinator, Football Communications	657.356.2068	Danny.Markino@Chargers.NFL.com
Jordan Colquitt	Coordinator, Marketing Communications & Alumni Affairs	657.356.2045	Jordan.Colquitt@Chargers.NFL.com
Leonie Strehl	Coordinator, Marketing Communications & Alumni Affairs	657.356.2140	Leonie.Strehl@Chargers.NFL.com

MEDIA INFORMATION

 Chargers Radio Network
Flagship or Affiliate

 Chargers Preseason Television
Network Flagship or Affiliate

CHARGERS RADIO NETWORK: iHeartMedia Los Angeles will again air all regular season and postseason Chargers games on ALT 98.7 FM — Los Angeles' New Alternative — complete with a two-hour pregame and one-hour postgame show.

Calls from Matt "Money" Smith, Daniel Jeremiah and Shannon Farren will be heard over the airwaves across Los Angeles and eight affiliate stations in California, Nevada and Oregon.

The Chargers Spanish broadcast called by Adrian Garcia-Marquez and Francisco Pinto will be locally broadcast on Que Buena 105.5/94.3 FM.

CHARGERS RADIO NETWORK AFFILIATES

- Los Angeles (KYSR-FM & KBUE-FM)*
- Bakersfield (KBFP-AM)
- Eugene, OR (KORE-AM)
- Fresno (KALZ-FM / KRZR-AM)
- Las Vegas (KXNT-AM)
- Modesto/Stockton (KFIV-AM)
- Palm Springs/Yucca Valley (KNWZ-FM, KNWH-AM)
- San Bernardino (KATY-FM)
- San Diego (KOGO-AM)

**Flagship Stations*

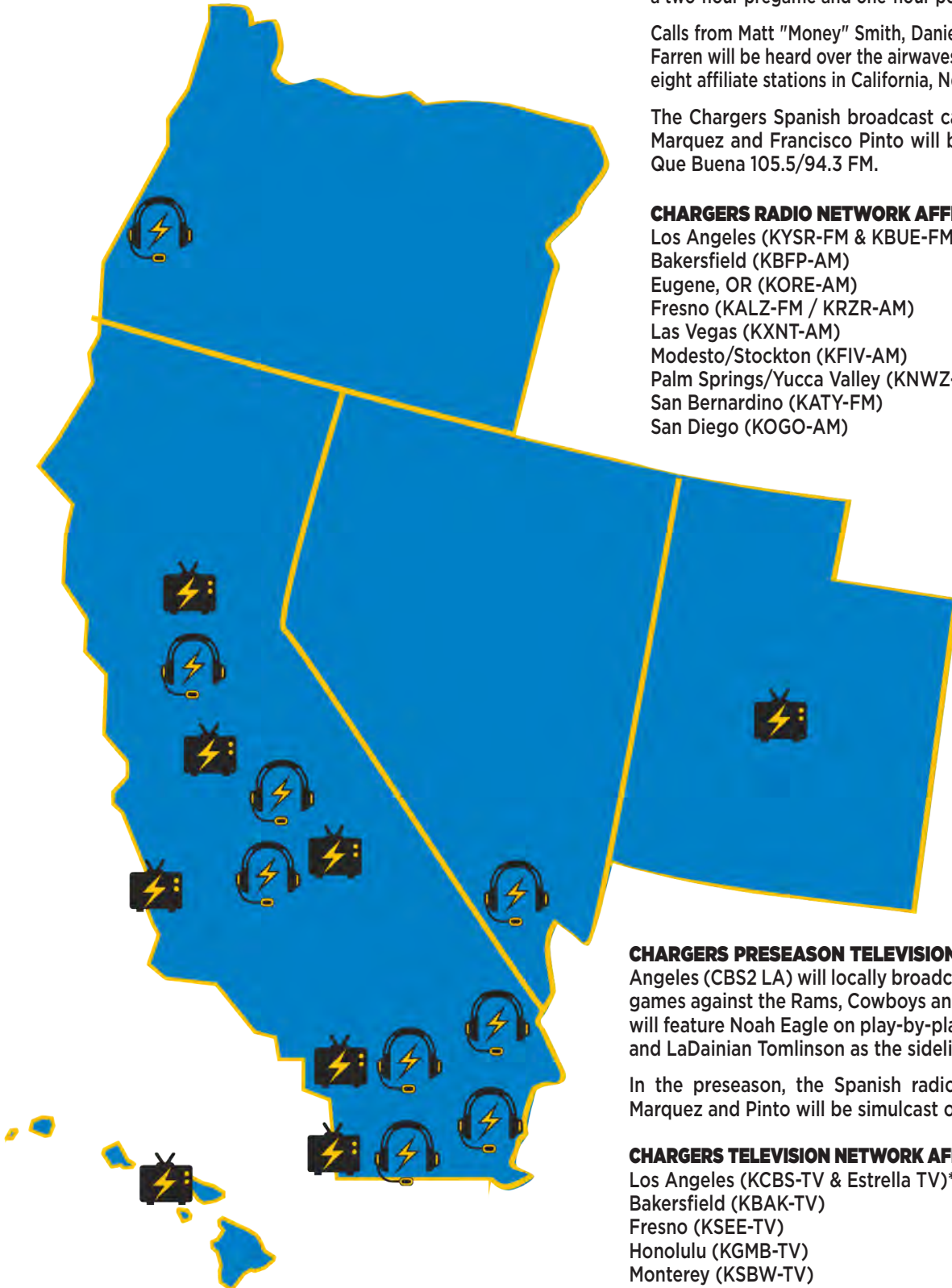
CHARGERS PRESEASON TELEVISION NETWORK: KCBS Los Angeles (CBS2 LA) will locally broadcast Chargers preseason games against the Rams, Cowboys and Saints. The broadcast will feature Noah Eagle on play-by-play, Dan Fouts as analyst and LaDainian Tomlinson as the sideline reporter.

In the preseason, the Spanish radio broadcast of Garcia-Marquez and Pinto will be simulcast on Estrella TV.

CHARGERS TELEVISION NETWORK AFFILIATES

- Los Angeles (KCBS-TV & Estrella TV)*
- Bakersfield (KBAK-TV)
- Fresno (KSEE-TV)
- Honolulu (KGMB-TV)
- Monterey (KSBW-TV)
- Sacramento (KQCA-TV)
- Salt Lake City (KTVX-TV)
- San Diego (KFMB-TV)

**Flagship Stations*



The background is a solid blue color with a repeating pattern of the words "BOLT UP" in a bold, sans-serif font. Each word is accompanied by a lightning bolt icon. The pattern is offset in a grid, creating a textured effect.

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LOS ANGELES CHARGERS

Inside the Chargers' defensive infusion: 'They fit the way we want to play'

By Jeff Howe
The Athletic
March 25, 2022

J.C. Jackson's eyes opened wide with a smile to match.

The seafood tower dominated the middle of the table at Mastro's Ocean Club in Newport Beach, Calif., with steak, lobster, shrimp and wine passed around throughout the night. Jackson, who had just finalized his five-year, \$82.5 million contract with the Chargers, was sitting next to head coach Brandon Staley. Several Chargers assistants and members of Jackson's camp attended the welcome dinner at the high-end chop house on the Pacific coast.

Staley conversed with Jackson as though they had known each other for years rather than days. For Jackson, undrafted in 2018, the night was a celebration of how far he'd come in his career and a glimpse into a promising future in Los Angeles. For the Chargers, the night represented a significant swing in free agency, as they loaded up on defense to balance their offensively gifted roster.

"Our goal this offseason was to build a complete team, a deep team," Staley told The Athletic. "And I think we're off to a good start."

After keeping wide receiver Mike Williams on a three-year, \$60 million contract, the Chargers got to work on a defense that allowed the fourth-most points in the NFL in 2021. They were 9-8 and eliminated from playoff contention during a 35-32 overtime loss to the Raiders on the final night of the regular season. It was a squandered opportunity — losing three of their final four games and surrendering an average of 36.7 points in those defeats — in star quarterback Justin Herbert's second season.

So the defensive-minded Staley and his staff aligned with general manager Tom Telesco and key front office members, including executive vice president of football administration Ed McGuire, to pinpoint a list of players who would make an impact on defense and fit with their culture.

"The list isn't very long," Staley said.

They started with edge rusher Khalil Mack. The Chargers recognized his high cap number for the rebuilding Bears, who overhauled their leadership structure this offseason by hiring general manager Ryan Poles and head coach Matt Eberflus, and the organization might be willing to move him.

Staley, who was the Bears' outside linebackers coach from 2017-18, has long had an affinity for the former Defensive Player of the Year. Mack held out for the entire 2018 offseason and training camp with the Raiders until the Bears jumped into the mix and acquired him in a trade package that included two first-round draft picks.

Mack immediately validated the Bears' faith.

"You trade for him (in 2018) and sign him to the richest contract of any defensive player in the National Football League," Staley said. "Then he had no offseason — no spring, no training camp. So everyone is waiting to see if this guy is in shape, has he been working? His first rep, I'll never forget it. In a one-on-one against (tackle) Bobby Massie, what that looked like with all the eyes on him, what everyone witnessed at that moment, you're like, 'Oh man, this is going to be different.' Just that explosion — what that looked like, what that felt like. You're looking at one of the elite players in the game. Just a rare player."

"You knew the ability. What expressed itself quickly was just how hard he works. In between drills, when the defense would go out against the scout-team offense, Khalil Mack would sprint to the football off the sideline. He would sprint there. Pretty soon, you've got (defensive tackle) Akiem Hicks sprinting there at 335 pounds. You've got (linebacker) Roquan Smith chasing him. And (cornerback) Kyle Fuller. It became like a game of who is going to get there first. What he did from a practice standpoint, he doesn't talk. What Khalil does is he plays, he performs, he competes. He doesn't need to say anything. He gets it done. There was no better evidence of a prime-time player than what that guy did for us in 2018. Just one of the rare players in the league."

Telesco called Poles and set the parameters for a potential trade. And on March 10, within a day of that initial conversation, the teams agreed to a deal. The Chargers got Mack for a 2022 second-round pick and a 2023 sixth-rounder.

With Mack on board, it'll be a lot more of a challenge for opponents to account for Joey Bosa and his 58 career sacks on the opposite edge. But beyond that, Staley was also excited about the way the Chargers could enhance their culture.

"That's someone who is going to make (safety) Derwin James better," Staley said. "Derwin James gives so much to our team. Well, who is giving Derwin James that in return on defense? Who is filling him up? We need to give him weapons so we can get even more out of him. This is a way to do it. Khalil Mack is a culture-changing player."

The Chargers were also focused on Jackson, who was widely viewed as the top cornerback in free agency. To feel comfortable with the requisite payday, the Chargers studied cornerbacks Jalen Ramsey, Marshon Lattimore, Marlon Humphrey, Tre'Davious White and Xavier Howard — five of the league's best corners — to evaluate how Jackson compared.

They were comfortable with the film work, notably his NFL-best 25 interceptions over the past four years. They were also impressed by his durability, as Jackson hasn't missed a game due to injury in four years (three healthy scratches in 2018). And because the Chargers place an emphasis on signing players with a championship pedigree, they appreciated Jackson's time with the Patriots, who won the Super Bowl during his rookie season.

There was also the James influence. The pair were teammates on a seven-on-seven team in high school in Florida, and James went all in to recruit Jackson to the Chargers when they linked up at the Pro Bowl in February.

James tried to sell Jackson on the team culture, the staff, their young talent, the new facilities, the California lifestyle. Everything, really. James was such an integral piece to the process that Jackson left the Pro Bowl already intrigued about the possibility of moving across the country.

His heart remained in Foxboro, though. Jackson wanted to stay with the Patriots, but the negotiations made very little progress. When the Patriots declined to use the franchise tag on Jackson, his departure from New England was a near certainty. The Patriots told Jackson to return to the negotiating table if his market didn't unfold as expected.

It did. McGuire called Jackson's camp on March 14 as soon as the negotiating window opened and expressed the Chargers' seriousness in signing the cornerback. They were among six teams that showed a decent level of interest, including three that were serious suitors. He had a few competitive offers in the same range as the Chargers' proposal, according to a source.

The Chargers' push was too strong to pass up. Jackson's deal was the fourth-highest among cornerbacks in total dollars, sixth in average annual value and third in fully guaranteed money.

"I felt like he'd be an outstanding fit for us and would provide us the type of impact player at an impact position," Staley said. "What was great about the deal, it was a good deal for both sides in terms of where he was able to exist in the marketplace and for us to be able to attack the rest of free agency. We're just really excited about him and his future and how he fits for us."

The Chargers, who ranked 30th against the run last season, also added defensive tackles Sebastian Joseph-Day (three years, \$24 million) and Austin Johnson (two years, \$14 million). Staley had history with Joseph-Day during their year together with the Rams, and those additions should help the Chargers' personnel transition into Staley's system.

"They fit the way we want to play. There was a pretty big system transition," said Staley, who took over as the Chargers head coach in 2021. "They really allow us to play the way we want to play. To pair Khalil with Joey on the edge of your defense, that's really going to help your run defense in a big way. I can't state this enough. Khalil Mack is one of the complete players in the league. This guy is not just a rusher. Why he's one of the top players in the NFL is because he's a complete player."

The improved front should create more turnover opportunities for James, Jackson and cornerback Asante Samuel Jr. Likewise, the playmakers on the back end should aid the rushers. If Herbert and the highly skilled offense continue to thrive, it'll put more pressure on opponents to play out of their comfort zone, thereby marrying it all together.

And again, Staley kept harping on the chemistry, rooted in advice he once received from longtime defensive coach Ed Donatell.

“You’re not just putting together a collection of pieces,” Staley said. “These players are people, and they’re competitors. You want to make sure when you onboard people into your locker room that they fit with who is already in your locker room. (Donatelli) told me one time, and I think it’s amazing wisdom, when you go sign a guy or trade for a guy, your locker room better know why they’re there, and it shouldn’t take them forever to know why and to see why. That’s always stayed with me.”

There’s one more aspect that shouldn’t be overlooked. Of course, the Chargers want to maximize their opportunity while Herbert is playing on his rookie contract. And looking into the future, he’ll be eligible for an extension during the 2023 offseason, though he is under the Chargers’ control through his fifth-year option in 2024.

It’s becoming an increasingly attractive place to play, and the Chargers want to ensure it’s a place where Herbert will want to stay.

“We’re going to be locked in every single year to be as good as we can be for our football team and for our fans,” Staley said. “But what we’re not going to do is mortgage our future to make that happen. We’ve been tactical so we can support Justin throughout his entire career, not just the beginning of his career. What we want to make sure we do is we have the assets, the capital to build around him for years to come. That’s been our pledge to him and all of our players. We’re trying to take advantage of the circumstance that we’re in now, and I think we’re being tactical in that approach. I think what it says to him is we’re going to compete to the best of our abilities.”

This month, that approach was highlighted by a defensive overhaul.

“We had a really good game plan going into this offseason,” Staley said. “I think we’ve executed it extremely well.”

Chargers coach Brandon Staley fulfills a dream with trip to Wimbledon

By Sam Farmer
Los Angeles Times
July 2, 2022

WIMBLEDON, England — Brandon Staley was simultaneously in his element and half a world removed from it.

The Chargers coach, a passionate tennis fan since childhood, spent the past two days watching Wimbledon matches in person with his wife, Amy. It's an anniversary trip for them and their first time in Europe.

Yet football is never too far away for Staley, who used the experience as an opportunity to hone his coaching techniques. He got a special invitation to watch his favorite player, Rafael Nadal, grind through a session on the practice courts. The Staleys also sat in the players' box for a Steve Johnson match, those prime seats courtesy of Marc Lucero, who coaches the former USC star.

"You're just trying to see how the top players in the world practice and perform," Staley said. "As a coach, you're trying to take in stuff in Rafa's practices that you kind of feel can help Justin Herbert. You're just observing. There were just a lot of moments in that hour pocket that I know I can bring back with me for Justin and Derwin James, because Rafa's the best of all time."

In March, the coach brought quarterback Herbert and safety James to the BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells in hopes of exposing them to the focus and dedication required to play tennis at an elite level for, in Nadal's case, a generation.

"There's always something you can observe if you're willing to look and listen," Staley said. "There's going to be something that I can see with my own two eyes that can help me with coaching."

Josh Rupprecht, who runs media relations for the Chargers, arranged for the Staleys to sit in friend Pete Sampras' seats at Centre Court. Sampras was another childhood favorite of the coach.

Staley, 39, grew up playing tennis in Ohio, was a competitive youth player and briefly considered focusing on that instead of football. The lure of playing quarterback was too strong, though, and he wound up playing the position at the University of Dayton.

"I would use my athleticism to beat you when I was a kid," he said. "I'm out there wearing basketball shoes and baggy shorts. I could use my basketball, football background to beat these rich kids in tennis."

"Beat them a different way. Beat them like Rafa does, with my mindset. Playing the game a different way. If you hit a good shot, I can go get it and I'll get it back. Then I'll go get another one. I'm just going to wear you down."

Even as football took front and center in his life, his love for tennis never disappeared. It did fade, however, after he lost his mother, Linda, to cancer when he was in college. She had picked up the sport at 35 and became a relentless player in their community.

"My mom was amazing," he said. "She was a human backstop. She'd get everything back. She was so consistent."

Linda Staley's dream was to see the U.S. Open in person one day, and perhaps Wimbledon.

That never came to be. But now her son has spent time on these hallowed grounds, and while visiting the Tennis Channel set Saturday he had a conversation with Martina Navratilova, one of her sports idols.

"If my mom were here now, she wouldn't believe this," he said.

Like his mother, Staley's wife began playing at 35, this year, and she's showing a natural aptitude for the sport. Amy is a former Division I college volleyball player, and has to resist the urge to dive for every shot. When the youngest of their three sons starts school this fall, Amy will have even more time to work on her game.

"Brandon just doesn't have the time for hobbies that most people do," she said. "It's always been a childhood love of his, reminiscing and talking about tennis. He had said for years, 'When we stop moving, I swear, we're going to start playing together. It's going to be something that we can do together, we can do with our kids...'"

The Staleys have moved 11 times since 2007, including NFL stops with the Chicago Bears, Denver Broncos and Rams before Brandon was hired as head coach of the Chargers in 2021.

Now, he has rediscovered tennis. This spring, he started taking an hour-long lesson every Friday at 6 a.m. before driving to work.

"My first lesson, it all came back for me," he said. "I was like, 'I've got to do this the rest of the year, even during the regular season. I've got to do this at least once a week.' It's been like a renaissance. I remember how much I loved it and why."

He feels it also brings him closer to his mom, who was a teacher.

"I tell people I come from the Bruce and Linda Staley coaching tree," he said. "I learned everything I know about coaching from my parents."

As for that other dream his mom had?

Staley is sending his wife and her friends to the U.S. Open this year.

Half a world away. And never closer.

Chargers begin groundbreaking moves with Super Bowl in mind

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
May 18, 2022

The Chargers conducted a groundbreaking ceremony Wednesday afternoon for their new training facility in El Segundo but before Chairman Dean Spanos said anything to mark the occasion, he asked one of his future neighbors for some help.

Sitting in the crowd was Lakers President Jeanie Buss, whose team won two championships immediately after moving its training center to El Segundo in March 2000.

"Jeanie, give me a little of that luck, will you?" Spanos said. "Our first two years, I'll take one. But I know Coach would like two, OK. I'd appreciate that."

The Chargers' facility will stand near the intersection of El Segundo Boulevard and Nash Street on a 14-acre site that was part of a sprawling campus operated by defense contractor Raytheon Technologies Corp.

The project is expected to be completed in spring 2024. Until then, the Chargers will remain in Costa Mesa, where they have been headquartered since relocating from San Diego in 2017.

"Finally, we have our home for the future," Spanos said. "I'm really happy about it. I know our staff is, our coaches, our family. Everybody's really excited about it. This is our home now."

Among those in attendance Wednesday were head coach Brandon Staley, safety Derwin James Jr. and quarterback Justin Herbert.

By the time the Chargers move to El Segundo, James and Herbert could be playing on significant second contracts. James can be extended as early as this summer. Herbert is eligible for an extension starting next offseason.

"I think you always want to extend players like that," Spanos said when asked specifically about James. "I'm not going to make any predictions, but I don't have to say enough great things about him. We love him."

Along with their day-to-day operations, the Chargers also intend to conduct training camp at the new facility. The three-story headquarters will be flanked by three practice fields.

There will be an outdoor lap pool and a lounge. Video games will be at the ready as part of a studio that eventually could host an e-sports team. The complex will have broadcasting facilities and a 180-seat auditorium for player meetings. On the top floor will be an indoor-outdoor hospitality club for VIP events.

The renderings on display during the ceremony Wednesday included one that featured a giant picture of Herbert near the main entrance of the building.

"I never imagined myself being on the side of a facility like that," Herbert said, smiling. "I thought that was pretty cool."

The ceremonial groundbreaking continued an aggressive offseason during which the Chargers have made numerous touted roster additions, particularly on defense.

A team that finished last season 9-8 and missed out on a playoff berth in the regular-season finale is now being talked about as a potential Super Bowl contender.

"I feel like expectations are a privilege," James said. "For people to think highly of you ... that's a privilege. So we need to go out there and do what we need to do."

Chargers break ground on new facility in El Segundo

*By Gilberto Manzano
Orange County Register
May 18, 2022*

EL SEGUNDO — As the star quarterback of the Chargers, Justin Herbert has seen his picture used for a lot of team events, but he was still surprised when he noticed his image on the side of the team's new facility rendering.

"I never imagined myself to be on a side of a facility," Herbert said Wednesday at the Chargers' groundbreaking ceremony for the future team headquarters and training facility. "I thought that was pretty cool. It's great to be able to share it with (Chargers safety) Derwin (James), Coach (Brandon Staley) and all these guys."

Herbert, James, Staley and General Manager Tom Telesco sat in the first row to watch team owner Dean Spanos officially announce the construction at the 14-acre site in El Segundo, which is slated for completion in the summer of 2024.

"As players, for them to believe in us, and come up with something like this, I feel like it's only going to help us get that competitive winning edge," James said.

With a lavish facility on the south of El Segundo Boulevard and east of Pacific Coast Highway on Nash Street, the Chargers are positioned to do plenty of winning in the coming seasons with Herbert and James, two of the best players in the NFL at their respective positions.

To possibly add more good fortune, the Chargers had a Greek orthodox priest conduct a 10-minute sermon before blessing the dirt and the participants who were tasked with shoveling during the groundbreaking ceremony.

"I'm just glad some water hit my head," Staley jokingly said. "It's like being at church, you're hoping it hits you."

The Chargers' new home is projected to have a main building that spans nearly 145,000 square feet adjacent to three full-sized football fields where the team will hold practices. The new headquarters is expected to have a roof-top hospitality club, full eSports gaming and content studios, and a 3,100-square foot media center.

An additional 3,400-square foot elevated outdoor turf area and two-lane lap pool for player rehabilitation are among the assorted outdoor amenities set for construction. Sonnenblick-Eichner Co. in Beverly Hills announced in March it has arranged \$276 million of construction and permanent financing for the facility.

"I really believe within the next two years, what you're going to see is going to be magnificent," Spanos said.

The Chargers will join the NBA's Lakers and the NHL's Kings as L.A. pro teams with facilities in El Segundo. It puts them less than 3 miles from LAX and 7 miles from SoFi Stadium.

Lakers owner Jeanie Buss and King president Luc Robitaille were in attendance for the Chargers' groundbreaking ceremony. Spanos said Buss was one of the first people to congratulate him when the team announced its move to El Segundo.

"Jeanie, give me a little of that luck, will ya," Spanos said on stage. "Our first two years, I'll take one, but I know Coach would like two championships."

"Jeanie Buss took my whole family out to dinner," Spanos later said. "She welcomed us. She's just a delightful person, and to have a friend like that just a mile away, I can't tell you what that means to us."

The future headquarters and facility is the Chargers' last step into settling in Los Angeles after relocating from San Diego in 2017. They played at the Galaxy's soccer-specific stadium in Carson for three seasons before becoming co-tenants with the Rams at SoFi Stadium in 2020.

While searching for a location for a permanent facility, the Chargers have had temporary headquarters in Costa Mesa since 2017.

"It's been five years in the making," Spanos said. "Finally, we have our home for the future. I'm really happy about it. I know the staff is, our coaches, our family, everybody is really excited about it. This is our home now."

Herbert, who had an NFL-caliber facility during his time at the University of Oregon, said the headquarters could help attract free agents and retain current players.

"It should be right up there with the best of the best. The Spanos family has invested a lot, and it is up to us as players to go out and deliver," he said.

Chargers help lead NFL's diversity program in sports medicine

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
May 24, 2022

Chargers head athletic trainer Damon Mitchell laughs today about how he basically fell into the only profession he has ever known.

Now he is part of an NFL program trying to help others such as him discover the opportunities available beyond the traditional doctor's office.

The Chargers are one of eight franchises participating in the Diversity in Sports Medicine Pipeline Initiative in 2022, the league announced Tuesday.

Each team will host two medical students at historically black colleges or universities for one-month rotations in September and October. The students will observe and engage in the treatment of players, on and off the field.

"Hopefully, this is something that will spark some interest," said Mitchell, who graduated from Morgan State before beginning a career that has him entering his 24th season with the Chargers.

After spending three years working part time for the team, Mitchell accepted a full-time position in 2001. He is in his sixth year as the Chargers' head athletic trainer.

And it all started because he was looking for something to do when he began at Morgan State and decided he'd try to wrestle for the school as a walk-on.

There was only one problem, he was told: Morgan State had dropped its wrestling program.

While sitting in the office of the athletic director, Mitchell met the school's athletic trainer, who persuaded him to give sports medicine a try. An eventual internship with the Philadelphia Eagles launched Mitchell's journey to the NFL.

For someone who said he always thought he'd be a high school physical education teacher, Mitchell now finds himself trying to encourage others to consider following his path.

Mitchell called the league's new diversity program "a unique opportunity to see how we work as an NFL team, see how doctors' offices work when they work with us and how it all marries together."

Chargers' head athletic trainer Damon Mitchell wants to create opportunities for HBCU medical students

By Gilberto Manzano
Orange County Register
May 24, 2022

Damon Mitchell is entering his sixth season as the Chargers' head athletic trainer and 24th season overall with the organization.

Legendary linebacker Junior Seau made his ninth consecutive Pro Bowl with the Chargers when Mitchell started as a seasonal intern in 1999.

"I was just talking to friends, remembering," Mitchell said. "It's really cool to say that, just to know that, he and I were friends. It's unbelievable."

Mitchell has developed several friendships with the players he's cared for in the past two decades, including with Chargers greats Philip Rivers, Antonio Gates and LaDainian Tomlinson. But he likely wouldn't have crossed paths with them if Morgan State University had a wrestling team.

When Mitchell found out the wrestling team was dropped, the university's athletic trainer offered him an opportunity to work with him, prompting the beginning of his new career. Now Mitchell is doing the same by offering opportunities and helping increase diversity in the field, so medical students don't have to stumble into sports medicine.

The Chargers are one of eight teams participating in the NFL Diversity in Sports Medicine Pipeline Initiative, a new project that works with the four medical schools within the Historically Black College Universities – Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science, Howard University College of Medicine, Morehouse School of Medicine and Meharry Medical College – with the purpose of increasing diversity and interest in primary care sports medicine and/or orthopedic surgery.

Sixteen HBCU medical students, two per team, will shadow athletic trainers and team doctors for one-month clinical rotations during the first two months of the 2022 regular season. Along with the Chargers, the Rams, Atlanta Falcons, Cincinnati Bengals, New York Giants, San Francisco 49ers, Tennessee Titans and Washington Commanders are participants of the first-year program.

"During their rotations, students will observe and participate in the care of sports medicine patients in NFL club settings," read the news release describing the position. "Students will work directly with and under the supervision of the orthopedic team physicians, primary care team physicians and athletic trainers to gain basic medical knowledge and exposure to patient care in sports medicine. Additionally, students will become familiar with return-to-play guidelines and on-field treatment considerations for NFL players."

"Students may also have the opportunity to attend home games and be present on the sideline for observation. By the end of the rotation, students will understand the basic elements of all facets of care provided to NFL players from an orthopedic, primary care sports medicine and athletic training perspective."

Mitchell said he's one of eight minorities who are head athletic trainers in the NFL. He wants to help increase those numbers by getting more fellow HBCU graduates involved in athletic training and sports medicine.

According to the NFL Physicians Society, 86 percent of its membership identifies as white, eight percent identify as Asian, five percent identify as Black and one percent identify as Latino. According to the Professional Football Athletic Trainers Society, 65 percent of its membership identifies as white, 23 percent identify as Black, eight percent identify as Latino and four percent identify as Asian.

"This can be a pretty good experience, and it may open up their eyes to a different side of medicine that they might not have been thinking about," Mitchell said.

Mitchell quickly enjoyed the new career he stumbled upon and worked his way up after his first seasonal internship with the Philadelphia Eagles. He impressed James Collins, the then-head athletic trainer for the Eagles, and was asked by Collins to join him with the Chargers in 1999. Collins is currently the Chargers' director of football and medical services. Mitchell was hired by the Chargers after he graduated from Morgan State and after passing his board certification exam in 2001.

"I excelled at it," said Mitchell, who grew up in New Jersey and began wrestling at age 8. "I didn't see it as work. I moved up and did administrative work. The grunt work on the field came later. I learned the business side and got more athletic training, speaking to doctors more."

When Mitchell started, master's degrees in athletic training weren't a requirement. He got his bachelor's degree in health education, met the right people and gained valuable experience as he developed friendships with future NFL Hall-of-Famers. Mitchell's brother, Erik, was also an intern with the Chargers before becoming an orthopedic surgeon.

Mitchell wants to help those who are interested and to lead them in the right direction.

"I thought I was going to be a high school PE teacher," Mitchell said. "I thought I was going to live the rest of my life in South Jersey. It changed because James Collins gave me a call."

Chargers Participating in 'NFL Diversity in Sports Medicine Pipeline Initiative'

By Hayley Elwood
Chargers.com
May 24, 2022

On Tuesday, the NFL, NFL Physicians Society (NFLPS), and Professional Football Athletic Trainers Society (PFATS) announced the NFL Diversity in Sports Medicine Pipeline Initiative, a program slated to give med students from four HBCU medical schools an opportunity to experience working in sports medicine with medical staffs of NFL teams.

The Los Angeles Chargers are one of eight NFL teams that will host 16 students for one-month rotations in September and October of this year. The NFL will expand the program to all 32 teams in 2023.

"It's monumental," Chargers head athletic trainer Damon Mitchell said. "This is something that will allow Black and Brown medical students the opportunity to see what it's like to be a sports medicine doctor within this setting. I just can't wait to get started to show these students what we do, hopefully they like what we do, and hopefully it's something they'd want to do."

2022 marks Mitchell's 24th season with the Chargers and sixth as the team's head athletic trainer. The significance of being part of this initiative is personal to Mitchell himself as he attended two HBCUs, Bethune-Cookman University and Morgan State, and cites his experiences there as the key to where he is today. He holds a degree from Morgan State in health education with an emphasis in athletic training.

"For Black and Brown students, [Bethune-Cookman University] said they're gonna give you a shot and make sure you have everything available to you to be a successful college student," he said. "I'm very thankful for that and very appreciative of that because that's what allowed me to get to where I am today. I transferred from Bethune and went to Morgan State and the rest is history. I met James Collins [Chargers director of football/medical services] there. I met Darryl Conway [Senior Associate Athletic Director, Chief Health & Welfare Officer, & Chief Infection Officer for University of Michigan Athletics], another mentor of mine who allowed me to get into this setting."

Per the NFL, this initiative will provide students with specific hands-on experience at the club level. At the Chargers, Mitchell and Hoag are putting the curriculum together to have the students work with the athletic training staff and team doctors, watch practice, and see how the doctors and athletic trainers work and communicate with the players and coaches. All of this will culminate with the students attending games and seeing how the work during the week comes together on gameday.

As someone whose brother decided to become an orthopedic surgeon after an opportunity to work in a sports medicine setting like these students altered his career path, and got his own foot in the door to the NFL with an internship with the Philadelphia Eagles, Mitchell believes this program will help "open doors" for these students in an otherwise very "competitive" environment such as sports medicine.

"Students may think, 'I don't have the resources to get in, I don't know folks to help me get in, so I'm gonna look elsewhere,'" he said. "When I did an internship with the Eagles, I thought of it as something to do. But when I met Darryl Conway, he said he knew folks in the NFL, and that's how I met James and James brought me along [to the Chargers] and showed me there's other avenues of athletic training you can do, one being the professional side.

"When these students come in, I want to show them that there are other things available to you, but maybe these doors have to open up. And these other seven clubs besides us will open up some doors to these students. We need more diversity within this small population because it helps us become better medical professionals."

Chargers Nominate Two Representatives to Attend NFL's Inaugural Coach and Front Office Accelerator Program

By Nick Cothrel
Sports Illustrated/FanNation
May 19, 2022

Chargers defensive coordinator Renaldo Hill and director of player personnel JoJo Wooden will participate in the NFL's inaugural Coach and Front Office Accelerator Program on May 23-24 in Atlanta next week.

The event will provide more than 60 diverse head coach and general manager candidates from all 32 teams and the league office for leadership development and networking opportunities. Teams nominated rising prospects to participate in the event.

"The NFL is committed to diversity and inclusion, and this program is the latest in a series of steps designed to improve our hiring practices and create opportunities for advancement," NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said in a statement. "The program helps ensure that clubs receive exposure to high-performing, up-and-coming NFL talent and candidates get a chance to learn the business on a working level from team owners and executives."

Hill enters his second season as the Chargers' defensive coordinator. After completing a 10-year NFL career as a cornerback and safety, Hill has risen up the coaching ranks with stops at the NCAA level before spending time on staff with the Dolphins and Broncos, coaching defensive backs.

The Chargers have added an abundance of players to the defensive side of the ball this offseason, uplifting the personnel of Hill's unit. In addition to the core of Joey Bosa and Derwin James who've already been in place the last few seasons, the Chargers have added the likes of Khalil Mack, J.C. Jackson, Kyle Van Noy and others for Hill to deploy their efforts.

Wooden, who oversees the Chargers' pro and college scouting departments, enters his ninth season with the team. Before joining the Chargers, he spent 16 seasons with the Jets from 1997 to 2012, holding the position as their director of player personnel across his last six years in New York. Wooden also has experience as a pro personnel assistant, director of pro scouting and as a senior pro scout.

Hill and Wooden are two candidates who the Chargers have identified as rising stars in the industry as a possible head coach or general manager in the future. The two of them will spend time next week networking directly with club owners.

"I think the accelerator is some of the most important work the league and our committee will do all year because the potential of the program is exponential," Falcons Owner and Chairman Arthur Blank said in a statement. "It's an unprecedented opportunity for emerging leaders, owners and team leadership to get to know each other better over these two days, and the relationships formed in this setting will be integral to future hiring cycles."

FMIA: Chargers Anime

By Peter King
NBC Sports
May 16, 2022

So the Chargers' 14-member video/social/wisecrass team put together a work of art in what has become a highly competitive business for reasons totally beyond me—social videos trumpeting the release of a team's schedule.

Of all the weird things NFL teams could trumpet, how the 17 games of a team's slate are ordered might be the most preposterous one. But, such is life in the NFL, where non-events two weeks after the draft and 11 weeks before the start of training camps become primetime television shows, and teams spend tens of thousands on in-house videos (and video teams) to create fun memes and social content. I guess it's a cool thing to have some fun in the No Fun League, and these videos, mostly, are a lot of fun.

This year, lots of teams used imaginative plotlines to promote their schedules—Russell Wilson as team intern in Denver; Eli Manning being his self-deprecating self with the Giants; Stephen A. Smith trolling and getting trolled by the Cowboys. But the best was the 2-minute, 7-second anime (the Japanese style of animation meant to appeal to adults probably more than children) done by the Chargers that was so full of subtle digs that it's stunning they crammed all the action into 127 seconds:

The goal: to reach a sub-culture outside of football, to drive conversation and connect with an audience the Chargers wouldn't normally relate, in hopes that the franchise would entertain Chargers fans and new fans.

Anime fans are very internet-savvy people between maybe 10 and 35, and one of the biggest is a Chargers feature producer and editor, Andrew Cordova.

He drew all the images, and he and the staff came up with all the fun subtleties in five weeks of meetings prior to the schedule release. In the video, there are 11 seven-second one-act plays (basically) and three very short two-act plays—with single bits on the teams the Chargers play once, and two references apiece to the three other AFC West teams.

The little digs are endless.

• Think of the images that got Urban Meyer in big trouble on the first day of a long weekend in Columbus last year, when Meyer was in a Columbus bar and had a couple of compromising photos taken. In the Chargers' anime, there's a snappily dressed figure at the bar in the approximate position Meyer was ... and instead of Meyer's face, there's a Jaguar head atop Meyer's body—with the Jaguar looking exceedingly forlorn. Perfect.

• Chargers versus Colts—there's a "Quarterback Carousel" at the circus, and the man running it is cartoonish Pat McAfee with his "For The Brand" tank top. (That's a slogan of his.)

• Chargers versus Seahawks—there's a graveyard poking fun at the decline of the Seahawks, with catchy inscribed gravestones of Seattle-based things: "LEGION OF BOOM, 2011-2018," "2001 SEATTLE MARINERS," "MINA KIMES FOOTBALL HOPES AND DREAMS" (Kimes likes the 'Hawks), "SUPER BOWL 49 GOAL LINE RUN PLAYS."

• Chargers versus Raiders—There's a treasure chest with old Raider junk, with a Chucky doll and a label of "AB's discarded helmets."

• Chargers versus Atlanta—A falcon flies into one of those omnipresent-in-the-south yellow-and-black Waffle House signs, advertising 28 percent off 3 waffles or more. (I have no hope for you if that image flies over your head.) The Falcon flies into the "W" on the sign, and it goes dark, and so of course you're left with AFFLE HOUSE. Arthur Blank has to be getting tired of all the jokes made at his team's expense, but this is a great one.

• Weirdly, apropos of nothing, is a drop-in of a dueling scene of cartoony Ian Rapoport and Adam Schefter furiously texting or tweeting on their phones.

Okay, I've got the McAfee, Kimes, Rapoport and Schefter meaning. The Chargers have worked with all four of those media people and know them. In a nod to pop culture and social-media mania, it wouldn't be a bad thing if those four people, some or all, would re-tweet the anime to their combined 16.1 million followers on Twitter, or talk about the video on TV. McAfee did, on his popular show, Friday, and Kimes spent a minute blasting it on "NFL Live" Friday.

Of all the images, the forlorn, slump-shouldered Jaguar was the most perfect. But the overall imagination—beginning with Cordova, the big anime fan on the Chargers' staff, was simply superb.

The best single moment of all the other videos? Easy. Josh Allen riding what appears to be a toy sheepdog, entering a room with various Bills players doing normal tasks, holding hands with a Buffalo wings-chomping tight end Dawson Knox and saying: "What does this all mean? Let me break it down for you. Absolutely nothing. Here's our schedule. Go Bills."

Thank you.

But hey ... it's a rare time in the NFL when fun can be poked. So have at it.

Chargers' savage 2022 schedule release video takes shot at dancing Urban Meyer

By Jeremy Layton
New York Post
May 13, 2022

The Los Angeles Chargers have officially raised the bar for schedule release videos – and took some impeccable shots at other teams in the process.

The team revealed their entire 2022 schedule in a hilarious anime send-up, going through all 17 matchups and animating each of their opponents – with varying levels of savagery.

After a pirate ship animation for the Week 1 Raiders matchup and dueling mechas of Patrick Mahomes and Justin Herbert for Week 2 against the Chiefs, the video tackled the Jaguars – the Week 3 opponent – and mocked Urban Meyer in an incredible four seconds. The video showed a jaguar wearing the outfit the former Jaguars head coach wore in the infamous video of a young woman grinding on his lap from 2021, looking sad and alone at a bar.

The incident was the most embarrassing one from Meyer's tenure in Jacksonville, though it was not the one that got him fired less than a full season in (a report that he physically kicked ex-Jaguars kicker Josh Lambo was). The Chargers' social media team, however, had no problem wading into the controversy.

Nor did they have a problem mocking the Browns and Deshaun Watson. Los Angeles plays Cleveland in Week 5, and in the video, the music stops and a graphic appears that says: "Redacted on advice of our lawyers."

It refers to the Browns trading for Watson and signing him to a \$230 million extension, despite 22 women accusing him of sexual misconduct. The trade was executed after Watson was cleared of criminal charges, though he still faces numerous civil suits over the allegations.

While the Chargers weren't too mean to the Chiefs, they jabbed fellow division rival Broncos by animating Mile High Stadium burning down after Russell Wilson wears a "Let Russ Cook" headband. They also took a shot at Antonio Brown's brief tenure with the Raiders, showing a dumpster that said "AB's discarded helmets."

For the Cardinals matchup, they mocked Kyler Murray deleting all of his social media posts. For the Seahawks, a gravestone for the "Legion of Boom" defense. For the Colts, a literal "quarterback carousel" that showed the QBs the team has gone through in recent years: Matt Ryan, Carson Wentz, Jacoby Brissett and former Chargers QB Philip Rivers.

All in all, it was a brilliant two minutes that put every other team's schedule release video to shame.

Chargers Win NFL Schedule Day With Hilarious Anime Announcement Video

By Daniel Chavkin
Sports Illustrated
May 12, 2022

The NFL's schedule release day has evolved into an opportunity for social media managers to show off their creativity in recent years. Every spring, organizations let their social media teams come up with fun ways to reveal their schedule.

This year, one of the fan favorites for most creative schedule reveal belongs to the Chargers. Los Angeles created an anime-inspired video, which depicts every opponent in succession.

The Chargers' full schedule features Amazon's first ever Thursday Night Football game vs. Kansas City and two Monday night games vs. Indianapolis and Denver. They will also play the Rams on New Years Day on Sunday Night Football.

While Los Angeles's video had the strongest reaction among viewers, a few other teams also successfully revealed their schedule in a creative way.

The Panthers used a nostalgia theme for their video, while the Giants enlisted Eli Manning's help for their unveiling.

However, Los Angeles's tweet won the night, receiving over 10,000 retweets in just two hours.

Chargers roast opponents in scathing anime-inspired NFL schedule release video

By Kevin Skivver
Sporting News
May 12, 2022

NFL schedule releases have become something of an art form in recent years, but teams generally aren't openly hostile to their upcoming opponents.

Enter the Chargers' social media team. Los Angeles went with a good, old-fashioned anime intro for its schedule reveal. But while anime intros are generally an odyssey of positivity through some faraway land, the Chargers chose violence.

Things start on a somewhat positive note, with the Raiders being depicted as your typical marauding pirates — ship at all — and the Chiefs getting the Pacific Rim-esque mech treatment they've earned.

Then it gets weird.

In Weeks 3, 4, and 5 the Chargers play the Jaguars, Texans and Browns, respectively.

The reveal starts with a remarkably sad-looking jaguar dressed suspiciously like a certain former 13-loss coach sitting alone in a pub (that game is in London).

That's followed up by a Texan wiping out in vintage anime form. Then, the piece de resistance: a cut to a field of rainbows and butterflies with a title card that says "REDACTED ON ADVICE OF OUR LAWYERS" to denote the Browns, who traded for Deshaun Watson this offseason.

The video goes on in much the same fashion, but that trio of blows is so devastating it's hard to top.

Good for the Los Angeles social team being terminally online. Schedule release day was a little bit better for it.

NFL Fans Couldn't Get Enough Of The Chargers Anime Video Taking Cracks At Their Opponents

By Robby Kalland
Uproxx
May 12, 2022

At 8:00 p.m. ET, Twitter was flooded with NFL schedule release videos as team social staffs were allowed to finally put their hard work from the offseason up, as the league put out all 32 schedules.

Each team takes a unique approach to these videos, with some getting celebrities on board — even celebrity haters, like Dallas did with Stephen A. Smith this year — and others picking a theme and going all in on it. Fitting in that latter category was the Los Angeles Chargers, who had to have spent an upsetting amount of time putting together this an anime video for this year's schedule release, which is far better than it has any right to be — and also features some incredible digs at their opponents.

It does a pretty incredible job of being entertaining for everyone, as anime fans will surely be able to pick out tributes to different shows, while NFL fans who have never seen an anime will be able to enjoy the not so subtle jokes about L.A.'s opponents.

Among those are the Jaguar posted up in a bar like Urban Meyer, having Kyler Murray deleting all his social media posts in Arizona, the 28-3 jab at the Falcons on the Waffle House sign, and avoiding a disaster by redacting whatever they had planned for Deshaun Watson and the Browns.

Unsurprisingly, the video was a hit with fans from all around the league, who dove in to find as many easter eggs as they could in the frames.

Los Angeles Chargers' draft not flashy, but necessary after splashy offseason start

By Lindsay Thiry
ESPN.com
May 2, 2022

COSTA MESA, Calif. -- The Los Angeles Chargers commanded attention at the outset of the offseason.

They acquired All-Pro outside linebacker Khalil Mack from the Chicago Bears in exchange for a second-round pick this year and a 2023 sixth-round pick. Then the Bolts signed Pro Bowl cornerback J.C. Jackson to a whopping five-year, \$82.5 million contract in free agency.

But a star-studded streak of activity came to a halt on the opening night of the NFL draft when the Chargers used their first-round pick, No. 17 overall, to select a guard.

"Guards are people too, right?" Tom Telesco asked, grinning, in a rhetorical question following the opening round of his 10th NFL draft as Chargers general manager.

After making the high-profile initial offseason moves to improve a defense that ranked No. 29 in the NFL last season and allowed an average of 27 points per game, the Chargers selected Boston College guard Zion Johnson with their first pick in the draft, prioritizing protection for third-year quarterback Justin Herbert and a need to keep their offense moving.

"I know it's not the sexiest pick in the world, but he's tough, he's durable, he's smart," Telesco said about Johnson, who is anticipated to step in immediately at right guard. "We have some excellent skill players, both at receiver, tight end, also at running back and with Justin Herbert.

"Obviously, these guys cannot do their jobs without a rock-solid offensive line. As much as this pick is to protect our quarterback, which is a big part of it, this is also to facilitate everybody else. It's pass protection, it's run game."

It's not just that the Chargers' first pick wasn't that exciting, their entire draft didn't warrant headlines. And it also didn't yield the exact results for which the general manager hoped.

"It never goes perfect, because you can't control everything," Telesco said. "But it was a good weekend of work."

However, in a season with playoff expectations after a near-miss in 2021 extended a three-year postseason drought, the Bolts were able to quietly address several areas of need, including the offensive and defensive lines, running back and the secondary.

"From the last game that we played 'til now, we're certainly a much different-looking football team," said Brandon Staley, whose first season as coach resulted in a 9-8 record and third-place AFC West finish. "There's a lot of time between now and when we play, so we're always going to be trying to find that winning edge, but I really like the team we have in front of us now."

The Bolts selected eight players after entering the three-day event with 10 total picks. Two of their picks, both seventh-round selections, ended up with the Bears, as the Chargers traded them to re-acquire the 2023 sixth-round pick they sent to Chicago as part of the Mack trade.

The Chargers selected guard Jamaree Salyer in the sixth round to join Johnson on the offensive line. The Georgia product has experience playing all five positions on the line, and although he said some teams projected him as a right tackle, the Chargers have penciled him in as an interior player.

"He has a great makeup, great attitude to come in and try and win a job," Telesco said about the NCAA national champion.

The Bolts used a fourth-round pick on Texas A&M running back Isaiah Spiller, whose rushing and pass-catching abilities are expected to complement Austin Ekeler. Staley said safety Derwin James Jr. vouched for Spiller "in a big way" as another former player of coach Jimbo Fisher, who coached James at Florida State and Spiller at A&M.

"[James] was saying, 'You know that if you can play all three downs for Jimbo that you're a legit guy,'" Staley explained. "He has really good instincts."

Spiller led the SEC in rushing yards since 2019, which includes a conference-best 1,844 rushing yards after contact in that span.

The Chargers also added Purdue fullback Zander Horvath in the seventh round.

Defensively, the Bolts built depth in their secondary by selecting Baylor safety JT Woods in the third round.

"He's a safety with a lot of cover ability, with his length and his speed," Telesco said. "He shows a little bit of corner movement, so we kind of see him as a defensive back."

They also picked Wake Forest cornerback Ja'Sir Taylor and Mississippi cornerback Deane Leonard in the sixth and seventh rounds, respectively.

The Chargers also drafted UCLA defensive tackle Otito Ogbornia in the fifth round to join a defensive front that already has undergone a significant makeover with the addition of defensive tackles Sebastian Joseph-Day and Austin Johnson in free agency. Like Ogbornia, Joseph-Day doesn't have to travel far, as he was with the Super Bowl champion Los Angeles Rams last season.

"We look at lot closer to what I expect to look like," Staley said about the interior of the defensive line. "We're not there yet, but we're a lot closer."

Some questions remain as the Chargers continue the offseason program and look ahead to training camp.

Despite adding two offensive linemen, there remains no clear starter at right tackle. Storm Norton and Trey Pipkins III will again be among candidates to fill the spot.

And depth continues to be a concern on the edge behind Mack, Joey Bosa and second-year man Chris Rumph II.

"To kind of fill out the depth of that position, we're going to have to look elsewhere," Staley said. "Whether it's the undrafted free agency right now or veteran free agency or before the first game - - sometime during training camp -- that'll probably happen at one of those three junctures."

As Staley prepared to exit his post-draft news conference, he provided a reminder the work is ongoing.

"Today is an ending, tomorrow is a beginning," he said.

Sometimes it's flashy. Sometimes, as seen during a three-day draft stretch, it's less than glamorous.

But if all goes as planned, each phase will play its part in making the Chargers relevant again come late January.

Chargers aim for more draft hits with the help of Snoop Dogg

By Gilberto Manzano
Orange County Register
April 27, 2022

Chargers general manager Tom Telesco had a slight hesitation before embracing the benefits of having a Snoop Dogg concert near the team's draft war room.

"Snoop is a coach, so we may have to lean on him a little bit and see who he likes in the first round," Telesco jokingly said.

It will be a unique setting for Telesco's 10th draft as general manager of the Chargers. For Thursday's opening round, the Chargers will operate from their locker room at SoFi Stadium while Snoop Dogg and Colombian artist Esther Anaya entertain fans on the field for DraftFest.

Chargers star players Justin Herbert, Keenan Allen and Derwin James are scheduled to greet fans on the performance stage before learning who Telesco drafted from the nearby war room.

Telesco didn't mind moving his draft operations for a day – the Chargers found their franchise quarterback in Herbert in the 2020 draft when COVID-19 forced every team to pick from home. Also, the Chargers are slated to pick 17th on Thursday, the same pick they had in 2018 when they landed James.

Throw in the lucky surfboard from the "pandemic draft" and the Chargers might turn the odds in their favor for the three-day draft in Las Vegas.

"If we hadn't had the pandemic draft, it would be really, really strange," Telesco said. "I would have been, probably, fighting back a little bit on it. ... If I can draft from my dining room table, I can draft from anywhere."

The Chargers didn't have to fight with the Rams to use SoFi Stadium on opening night of the draft as the Rams don't pick until the third round Friday. The Rams haven't made a first-round pick since selecting Jared Goff first overall in 2016. They have shipped their top picks in trades for Goff, Brandin Cooks, Jalen Ramsey and Matthew Stafford.

The Rams' aggressive approach took time but paid off with a Super Bowl victory more than two months ago and now a handful of teams have followed Rams general manager Les Snead's "Eff them picks" mantra.

The Chargers' AFC West rivals Raiders and Broncos don't have first-round picks after acquiring wide receiver Davante Adams and quarterback Russell Wilson, respectively. The Chiefs, the six-time AFC West champions, have two first-round picks after trading speedy wide receiver Tyreek Hill to Miami. Eight teams will enter Thursday's draft without a first-round pick, including the Chicago Bears, Indianapolis Colts, Cleveland Browns and San Francisco 49ers.

"I haven't changed, no," Telesco said after being asked if the notable trades have made him change his draft approach. "I think what people forget about the Rams – I mean, everyone is focused on those first-round picks – but they've drafted and developed players really well, middle and late (rounds). It kind of gets glossed over. I guess it's not as sexy, but they've done a great job with that, both Les and (Rams coach) Sean (McVay)."

Telesco has selected at least one first-round draft pick in his prior nine drafts with the Chargers and most of those picks have been successful. Left tackle Rashawn Slater (2021), Herbert (2020), James (2018), wide receiver Mike Williams (2017) and edge rusher Joey Bosa (2016) are cornerstone pieces for the organization, and even running back Melvin Gordon (2015) and cornerback Jason Verrett (2014) had success before moving on to different teams.

Kenneth Murray (2020) and Jerry Tillery (2019) so far haven't lived up to expectations. Ironically, Telesco's first draft in 2013 had arguably his worst first-round selection with offensive tackle D.J. Fluker, who went 11th overall, and his best middle-round pick in Allen, who was taken in the third round and is now a five-time Pro Bowler.

But, unlike the Rams, Telesco hasn't found enough gems in the middle to late rounds, which could be one reason why the Chargers have only two playoff wins in his tenure. Only one player remains from Telesco's drafts in 2018 (James), 2017 (Williams), 2016 (Bosa) and 2013 (Allen) and none from 2014 and 2015.

Telesco is also on his third head coach – Brandon Staley was preceded by Anthony Lynn (2017-2020) and Mike McCoy (2013-2016).

Most GMs wouldn't see a 10th season with the same team without at least winning one division title, something Telesco hasn't done, but not many GMs can say they have drafted six Pro Bowlers from their first-round selections, including a franchise quarterback.

With the 17th pick, the Chargers could start their draft by selecting defensive tackle Jordan Davis to repair their run defense, or cornerback Trent McDuffie to defend the star quarterbacks of the AFC West, or wide receiver Chris Olave to stretch the field for Herbert, or offensive tackle Trevor Penning to block for Herbert.

But the Chargers also need a running back to complement Austin Ekeler, another pass rusher to assist Bosa and Mack, depth at linebacker and players who can contribute on special teams, an area that has hampered the organization for the past decade. The Chargers have 10 total picks, with two in the sixth round and four in the seventh round, to address these needs.

"In my career, I can't remember ever having this many picks in the sixth and seventh rounds," Telesco said. "I have no idea how it's going to roll. When you get down toward that seventh round, the way we do our board, there's not a lot of players left down there. We'll kind of see how it shakes out. It's going to be kind of fun, I guess, to have that many picks in the seventh, but we'll see. It wouldn't be a straight focus on just special teams. We'll kind of see where it goes."

Telesco said it's possible that the team could look to trade down in the first round to regain the second-round pick they sent to the Chicago Bears for Khalil Mack, but that might put them in the back of the line for the opening round. Telesco has never traded down in the first round, but he's also never traded a second-round pick for a veteran player before acquiring Mack.

A few more quality pieces in this year's draft could be what the Chargers need to finally win their first division title since 2009.

"Yeah, I don't really grade drafts," Telesco said. "I'll leave that up to you."

Los Angeles Chargers loading up to take full advantage of Justin Herbert rookie contract window

By Paul Gutierrez
ESPN.com
April 2, 2022

PALM BEACH, Fla. -- Looking for the hottest trend in NFL circles? Try ... teams taking advantage of their young-but-elite quarterback's still relatively manageable rookie contract.

Exhibit A: the Los Angeles Chargers and Justin Herbert.

"It's not just enough to outscore people in this league," Chargers coach Brandon Staley said at last week's NFL owners' meetings. "You've got to win in a lot of different ways in this league. It's not just surrounding [Herbert] with offensive weapons; it's surrounding him with a complete team, where the pressure isn't on him every single game to score 35 [points], to throw for 350 [yards], you know, to bring you back. And I think that's what we're trying to do is surround Justin and all of our players with a complete team."

And you have to be able to afford said pieces, right?

So with Herbert, the No. 6 overall pick of the 2020 draft, entering Year 3 of his four-year, \$26.5-plus million contract, the Chargers were able to go after big names with just-as-big price tags. And primarily on the defensive side of the ball.

First, the Chargers acquired edge rusher Khalil Mack from the Chicago Bears for a second-round pick in this year's draft and a sixth-rounder in 2023. The deal was agreed to March 10 and made official on March 16, the first day of the new league year. Mack has been an All-Pro performer in eight seasons with the Raiders and the Bears, registering six sacks in seven games last season and a career-high 12.5 in 2018 in Chicago when Staley was his outside linebackers coach.

"That's going to be a fun guy to play with," Mack said of Herbert. "He has a lot of different intangibles. Not just from a football aspect, but just the mindset. Just watching that mindset from afar, I've kind of admired it. I admire his mindset more so than his play."

Los Angeles converted \$13.5 million of Mack's salary into a bonus and created \$9 million in salary cap space, setting the stage for the rest of the week.

Because on March 14, the Chargers got defensive lineman Sebastian Joseph-Day to change SoFi Stadium locker rooms, convincing the former Los Angeles Rams nose tackle to agree to a three-year, \$24 million free-agent contract with \$15 million guaranteed. Joseph-Day had three sacks in seven games last season before suffering a torn pectoral in early November, though he returned for the Rams' Super Bowl LVI triumph.

And a day after that, the Chargers reached a deal to sign cornerback J.C. Jackson to a five-year, \$82.5 million deal with \$40 million guaranteed, as well as defensive lineman Austin Johnson to a two-year, \$14 million contract with \$10.625 million guaranteed. Jackson has a league-best 25 interceptions since entering the league in 2018 and his eight interceptions in 2021 were one more than the Chargers had as a team.

"Football," Herbert said last season, "is a three-phase game."

Even if the Chargers were defense-heavy in free agency ... ostensibly to help Herbert. And without Herbert's still-affordable contract, it probably wouldn't have been possible.

Especially not in an AFC West that saw the Denver Broncos land quarterback Russell Wilson, the Las Vegas Raiders acquire receiver Davante Adams and the six-time defending division champion Kansas City Chiefs trade away receiver Tyreek Hill but sign JuJu Smith-Schuster.

"I think what you're seeing right now is competition in the NFL," Staley said. "I think it's amazing for the NFL. You're seeing all these teams make these types of moves and I think that's what the NFL represents is, 'Hey, you better be working to make your team as good as you can be or you're going to get left behind.'"

Getting to know the 5 additions to Brandon Staley's Chargers coaching staff

By Daniel Popper
The Athletic
February 24, 2022

Brandon Staley has added five new coaches to his Chargers staff this offseason.

Let's meet them.

Special-teams coordinator Ryan Ficken

The Chargers hired Ficken on Feb. 3 to replace former special-teams coordinator Derius Swinton, who the team fired five days after the end of the regular season.

Swinton achieved commendable on-field results despite working with a very young and inexperienced group of special-teams players. The Chargers found some stability in that phase after they added kicker Dustin Hopkins and returner Andre Roberts during the bye in Week 7. Swinton deserves credit for successfully integrating those two veterans into his unit and also for getting improvement out of his young coverage players and return blockers over the course of the season. The Chargers ranked 21st in special-teams EPA from Week 10 on, according to TruMedia. And they finished 18th in weighted special-teams DVOA, Football Outsiders' efficiency metric that puts more emphasis on recent games. Swinton was given a pretty barren cupboard when he arrived in the winter of 2021, and he helped turn the Chargers special teams into a functional unit by the end of the season.

But as general manager Tom Telesco said at his end-of-season news conference, Swinton was not a "perfect fit." My read on the situation is that Swinton's coaching style and personality did not marry with Staley's vision. And so Staley went and found that "perfect fit" in Ficken.

Ficken, 42, had spent his entire NFL coaching career with the Vikings, serving various roles with the organization over 15 seasons under three different head coaches. Ficken, who was a walk-on receiver in college at Arizona State, was hired by Brad Childress in 2007 as the Vikings' assistant running backs coach. In 2009, he shifted to assistant wide receivers coach for the final two seasons of Childress' tenure as head coach.

Ficken stayed in that same role when Leslie Frazier was promoted to head coach in 2011 to replace Childress. In 2013, Frazier's final season with the Vikings, Ficken made the transition to assistant special-teams coach. He stayed on in the same role when Mike Zimmer replaced Frazier in 2014. Ficken served as assistant special-teams coach for Zimmer from 2014 to 2020 before being promoted to special-teams coordinator last season. When Zimmer was fired in January, Ficken became available.

It is impressive that Ficken remained with one organization for that long. The NFL is a difficult business, and coaches tend to bounce around quite a bit. That longevity would seem to point to both his capability as a coach and an ability to fit in and mesh with different personalities.

"The coaches there, when there was turnover, they believed in me and thought I could add value to the organization," Ficken said Thursday.

In 2013, the Vikings and then-special-teams coordinator Mike Priefer were looking for an assistant special-teams coach after former assistant Chris White left to take a college job at Iowa. Ficken said Priefer had seen him working with special teams during his time as the assistant receivers coach and decided to offer him the role. Priefer is now the Browns' special-teams coordinator.

"He brought me over to the dark side," Ficken said, "and I haven't looked back since."

Ficken and Staley are close friends with Eagles defensive coordinator Jonathan Gannon. Staley and Gannon grew up together in Ohio. Ficken and Gannon coached together with the Vikings from 2014 to 2017. Gannon was Minnesota's assistant defensive backs coach. That was the primary connection. Ficken also coached Cordarrelle Patterson for four seasons in Minnesota. Staley coached Patterson for two seasons at Hutchinson Community College in Kansas. Staley was the assistant head coach and defensive coordinator at Hutchinson from 2010 to 2011. Patterson is slated to become a free agent in March.

Ficken led a notable turnaround in his only season as Vikings special-teams coordinator. The Vikings ranked 31st in special-teams DVOA in 2020 and 13th last season.

On his philosophy, Ficken said, "Keep it simple. That's my biggest thing. I want to make sure I keep it simple so I can go ahead and allow those guys' God-given abilities to take over."

Ficken's first coaching job was at UCLA, where he served as a graduate assistant from 2004 to 2006. He said he first moved to Newport Beach after college when he was still looking for a job, a short drive from the Chargers' current facility in Costa Mesa. He then moved to Hermosa Beach before eventually settling in Culver City. So this is very much a full-circle opportunity for Ficken, who is in the process of moving his wife and three children to Southern California.

"It's exciting," Ficken said. "Looking forward to the challenge."

Special-teams assistant Chris Gould

The Chargers announced the hiring of Gould as Ficken's special-teams assistant this week. He is replacing former special-teams assistant Mayur Chaudhari, who was fired along with Swinton in January.

Gould, 36, is the younger brother of 49ers kicker Robbie Gould. He spent the past seven seasons with the Broncos — the first two as a coaching assistant and then the past five as an assistant special-teams coach. Gould and Staley coached together for one season with the Broncos in 2019 on Vic Fangio's staff.

Gould was a punter and kicker in college at the University of Virginia. He went on to kick for three seasons in the Arena Football League — two years with the Chicago Rush and one with the Arizona Rattlers. He was then hired as a special-teams quality control coach for Syracuse in 2012. He spent three seasons there before joining the Broncos.

Gould brings specialist expertise to the staff at a time of transition for the Chargers' specialist group. Hopkins and long snapper Matt Overton are both set to become unrestricted free agents. So is Roberts. And punter Ty Long is a pending restricted free agent.

"He's a phenomenal coach," Ficken said of Gould. "He's got a great background with some of these specialists."

Ficken said he was involved in Gould's hiring process. He also said Gould's responsibilities will stretch beyond just specialists.

"He might have a niche in that because he was a kicker," Ficken said. "But he's a well-rounded coach."

Offensive line coach Brendan Nugent

The Chargers offense had an outstanding season in 2021. They finished fourth in both offensive EPA/play and Football Outsiders' offensive DVOA. That efficiency and productivity, rather predictably, led to some brain drain from the offensive staff. Coordinator Joe Lombardi interviewed for the Texans' head-coaching vacancy. Wide receivers coach Chris Beatty reportedly interviewed for the Vikings' offensive coordinator job. Tight ends coach Kevin Koger reportedly interviewed for the Packers' OC job.

Only one coach was poached, though, and that was offensive line coach and run game coordinator Frank Smith, who was hired as the offensive coordinator on Mike McDaniel's Dolphins staff. Smith did a tremendous job with the Chargers' offensive line this past season. He got an influx of talent between Corey Linsley, Matt Feiler and Rashawn Slater. But he navigated some significant injuries to Oday Aboushi and Bryan Bulaga and had that group, on aggregate, playing well, particularly in pass protection. Slater had an All-Pro season as a rookie. The Chargers allowed the fourth-lowest pressure rate in the league in 2021, according to TruMedia.

Nugent, 39, will replace Smith. Nugent spent the past seven seasons with the Saints. He was the assistant offensive line coach from 2017 to 2019, then was promoted to run game coordinator and assistant offensive line coach in 2020. He served as the Saints' offensive line coach last season.

Lombardi worked with Nugent on Sean Payton's Saints staff for five seasons. Lombardi was the Saints' quarterbacks coach from 2016 to 2020. Nugent should be very familiar with Lombardi's scheme, so this hire makes a lot of sense. Payton, of course, retired this offseason.

Pass game specialist Tom Arth

Arth and Staley go way back. They first crossed paths in 2013 when Arth was the head coach at Division III John Carroll and Staley was the defensive coordinator and secondary coach. Staley left for a season in 2014 to coach at James Madison before returning to Arth's John Carroll staff for two more seasons as DC from 2015 to 2016.

In 2017, Arth, 40, left John Carroll to become the head coach at Chattanooga, which plays in the FCS. He spent two seasons in that role before rising to the FBS and taking the head coaching job at Akron, where he coached for the last three seasons. Meanwhile, Staley left for the NFL in 2017 to join up with Fangio in Chicago.

Arth was fired from Akron in early November after compiling a 3-24 record — though it's worth mentioning that the university was dealing with COVID-19-related financial issues during his tenure.

Amid these issues, Staley had reportedly targeted Arth for his initial staff last offseason. Now that Arth was a free agent, he made the move to Southern California.

Offensive assistant Mike Hiestand

Hiestand spent the last three seasons working on Fangio's defensive staff with the Broncos. He was a defensive quality control coach and assistant to the head coach in 2019 and 2020 and was the assistant defensive line coach and assistant to the head coach in 2021. Hiestand and Staley were on the same Fangio staff in 2019.

The Chargers announced Hiestand as an offensive assistant, which is interesting considering his playing and coaching history is all on the defensive side. Hiestand was a linebacker in college at Illinois State. He was a defensive grad assistant at Florida International in 2013 and at Notre Dame from 2014 to 2015. He then served as defensive coordinator at Ave Maria University — an NAIA school — from 2016 to 2018 before joining the Broncos.

Hiestand specialized in defensive line last season, and that position group was obviously a weakness for the Chargers in 2021. Giff Smith remains the defensive line coach, but he was a holdover from Anthony Lynn's staff under defensive coordinator Gus Bradley. Staley had issues translating his run defense scheme to the players early last season and he and defensive coordinator Renaldo Hill basically overhauled that entire phase of the defense during the bye. That led to some improvement over the second half of the season. Perhaps Hiestand will bring added fluency in the scheme after coaching with Fangio for the past three seasons.

We will find out more about Hiestand's specific role when we talk to Staley next week at the combine in Indianapolis.

Chargers-Chiefs will be first Thursday night game on Amazon

*By Joe Reedy
Associated Press
April 28, 2022*

Los Angeles Chargers quarterback Justin Herbert will visit Patrick Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs on Sept. 15 in the first game on Amazon Prime Video's "Thursday Night Football" package.

The Week 2 matchup between AFC West rivals was announced on Thursday during the first round of the NFL draft.

Amazon will pay \$1 billion a season to carry the games for 11 years. Prime Video will carry 15 regular-season and one preseason game. They will be available on stations in the participating teams' markets, which is the same practice when they are on ESPN and NFL Network.

NBC has the opening game of the season and also Thanksgiving night. The final week of the regular season has two games on Saturday and the remaining 14 on Sunday.

Al Michaels and Kirk Herbstreit will be the announcing team for the "Thursday Night Football" games. Michaels moves to Prime from NBC while Herbstreit will pull double duty. He will do NFL games for Prime and remain ESPN's lead college football analyst.

The league announced last week that the complete schedule will be released on May 12. However, international games will be revealed on May 4 with other notable matchups being announced the week of May 9.

This will be the fourth time in five seasons that the AFC West rivals have had one of their games in prime time. They met last year on Thursday night in Week 15 when Kansas City won 34-28 in overtime. They also had a Thursday night game in 2018 and a Monday night matchup in 2019 in Mexico City.

The Chiefs and Chargers have split their regular-season matchups the past two seasons. Last season, Kansas City (13-6) made its fourth straight trip to the AFC Championship game before losing to Cincinnati in overtime. Los Angeles was 9-8, but missed the postseason for the third straight year after dropping three of its final four games, including the regular-season finale to the Las Vegas Raiders in overtime.

There could be other AFC West matchups in prime time when the complete schedule is announced. The division is loaded with star power at quarterback with Mahomes, Herbert, Las Vegas' Derek Carr and Russell Wilson's arrival in Denver.

BRANDON STALEY

Chargers trade for Khalil Mack is a deviation from their norm — and hints at Brandon Staley's influence

By Daniel Popper
The Athletic
March 10, 2022

The Chargers have made their move, and Brandon Staley's fingerprints are all over it.

Khalil Mack, a four-time All-Pro edge rusher and former NFL Defensive Player of the Year, is headed to Los Angeles. The Chargers on Tuesday agreed to trade a second-round pick in next month's draft and a sixth-rounder in 2023 to the Bears in exchange for Mack. The Athletic confirmed. ESPN was first to report the trade, which will not become official until the new league year begins Wednesday.

This deal is monumental for two reasons:

1. The Chargers are adding an elite defensive player in Mack, and he will single-handedly change the makeup of a defense that ranked 26th in Football Outsiders' DVOA and 28th in TruMedia's EPA/play last season.

2. Staley is showing how much influence he has in personnel decisions, and it signifies a shift in how the Chargers are doing business.

The first point is obvious. The second point is less so.

Mack just turned 31 years old. Trading draft picks for an older player is not something general manager Tom Telesco has previously done. It goes against every fiber of his team-building philosophy. In fact, before Tuesday, Telesco had traded a draft pick for a player just two times in his nine years as GM. He traded a conditional seventh-round pick to the Cowboys for defensive tackle Sean Lissemore in 2013. And he traded a conditional seventh-round pick to the Bills for quarterback Cardale Jones in 2017.

That's it. That's the list.

In his time with the Chargers, Telesco has always stuck to a firm roster-construction strategy. Draft players, develop them and re-sign the ones who have earned second contracts. Then use free agency and trades only as a means to supplement the roster with talent.

The Mack deal is a deviation from that strategy. And it is no coincidence that this deviation is occurring as Staley is entering his first full offseason as the Chargers' head coach.

Staley has a close personal relationship with Mack. The two spent a season together in Chicago in 2018. Staley was Mack's position coach as the outside linebackers coach under defensive coordinator Vic Fangio. Mack had 12 1/2 sacks and six forced fumbles that season and earned first-team All-Pro honors. That connection was certainly a factor in this trade.

There were other important factors, too, primarily where the Chargers are currently positioned in terms of talent and finances.

The defense was not good enough last season in any facet. They could not stop the run. They could not cover consistently enough on the back end. They did not produce enough pressure on the quarterback. That all led to the worst third-down defense in the league and a downright bad unit overall, despite star players Derwin James and Joey Bosa playing the whole season.

When Staley took the head-coaching job last winter, he made it a priority to improve and stabilize the Chargers' offensive line. They signed three new starters in free agency and drafted a franchise left tackle, Rashawn Slater, in the first round. By focusing resources on that position group, the defense was mostly neglected. The only defensive starter they added in the offseason was rookie cornerback Asante Samuel Jr. The organization felt like Staley — a respected defensive coach — could take the existing pieces, led by James and Bosa, and turn it into a functional defense. That did not happen, in large part because of depth issues.

Now we are seeing Staley's vision for his second season. He solidified the offensive line in 2021 to help ensure Justin Herbert's continued development. In 2022, he is infusing his defense with talent, and he is doing so in a manner that runs contrary to how the Chargers normally operate.

Adding to the defense was the stated goal entering this offseason, and we are seeing it come to fruition with this trade for Mack, who will impact the defense in several ways. The Chargers now have two elite edge rushers on opposite sides of their defensive line, and opposing offenses will not be able to double-team Bosa and Mack every play. The pass rush — which ranked 19th in pressure rate last season — will improve. So will the run defense.

Financially, the Chargers' ample cap space allowed them to make this deal. They entered this offseason with close to \$60 million in space, according to OverTheCap. That number decreased after they agreed to an extension with Mike Williams earlier this week. But they still had space, and they are using it on Mack. All of this, of course, is made possible by Herbert's cheap contract. You have more money to spread around to other position groups when you have an elite quarterback on a rookie deal.

"This year, we can attack it a little bit differently because we do have a lot of cap space and we do have a quarterback on a rookie deal," Telesco said at the combine earlier this month, foreshadowing what was to come. "But the goal every year is the same. The goal is to challenge and to compete for a championship."

Mack will have a cap hit of \$17.75 million in 2022, according to numbers from OverTheCap. That's going to take up a healthy portion of the Chargers' remaining spending space for this offseason. But they will still have enough room to be players in the free-agent market, particularly at cornerback and on the defensive line. Re-signing Uchenna Nwosu is now less likely.

Mack's cap hits will jump to \$22.9 million in 2023 and \$23.25 million in 2024. The Bears are reportedly eating the \$24 million in remaining prorated signing bonus on Mack's deal, which lowers the cap hits he will have with the Chargers.

"We certainly have the space, whether it's for our players or for players from the outside," Telesco said at the combine. "It's a nice resource to have right now."

Staley needed defensive talent, and the Chargers went and got a familiar player who could elevate his unit to new heights.

Herbert has two years left on his rookie deal and is eligible for a market-setting extension next offseason.

Telesco has said he does not believe in championship windows. But the time to win is now. It will only get more challenging once Herbert signs his second deal. That is undeniable. And the team making this aggressive move is proof of that window existing.

The trade was an emphatic statement.

Brandon Staley's Chargers are not your Same Old Chargers.

Staley's journey: Chargers coach's cancer battle defined him

By Joe Reedy
Associated Press
October 3, 2021

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Chargers coach Brandon Staley will be on the national stage Monday night for the first time when Los Angeles hosts the Las Vegas Raiders.

The narrative will be predictable. How Staley went from Division III defensive coordinator to NFL head coach in five years.

But the 38-year old Staley also wants the attention shifted another direction. Something that is more personal and real to him.

As the NFL begins its "Crucial Catch" initiative, Staley would like everyone to know about his most significant victory — being a cancer survivor after he was diagnosed with Hodgkin lymphoma 14 years ago.

"I wouldn't be the head coach of the Los Angeles Chargers if it weren't for my cancer journey. Cancer has been, if not the biggest, one of the biggest reasons why I'm here today," Staley said on Saturday. "I think what cancer does is that it can bring out the best in you. I know that it's brought the best out in me."

Staley was in his first season as a graduate assistant at Northern Illinois in 2007 when doctors discovered a grapefruit-sized tumor on his right lung. The Perry, Ohio, native underwent six months of chemotherapy treatments in Cleveland during offseason breaks. That was followed by six weeks of morning radiation sessions in Chicago during the season so that he could continue coaching.

Cancer has also affected more than just Brandon. His mother, Linda, died from breast cancer in 2004. Bruce, his father, had thyroid cancer when Brandon was younger and completed treatment for prostate cancer last year.

"You can't do it by yourself. I learned that by watching my mom and my dad," Staley said. "I think that so much of beating cancer is believing in yourself. A lot of times, it's knowing that there are other examples out there that show you that you should believe. I got to see it with my mom and dad. I was lucky that it was personal."

Jason Staley — Brandon's twin brother and younger sibling by 2 1/2 minutes — said that his brother's approach to beating cancer bears many resemblances to his coaching philosophy and getting those around him to buy in.

"He's always had this special way to get you to believe. Every time I talked to him, he explained, this is what's going on, this is what I'm doing, and this is how we're going to beat this," Jason Staley said.

"The way he approached it was very methodical. There were no peaks and valleys. It was one treatment at a time; find what progress you can, and continue to get stronger and better.

"His ability to stay in the present and not let it get too big was the catalyst for him. Not letting the past affect him is the same way he coaches his

players. He said, 'I'm just going to compete, and I'm going to grind this thing into the ground,' and 'I'll be damned if he didn't do it.'"

Northern Illinois was the first step on a coaching road that to Staley being hired by the Chargers in January. After a second stint as John Carroll University's defensive coordinator in 2016, he was a linebackers coach in Chicago and Denver under Vic Fangio for three years before becoming the Los Angeles Rams defensive coordinator in 2020. In one season, the Rams defense went from 13th to leading the league.

Staley's communication skills have drawn rave reviews from players. Defensive lineman Linval Joseph, who is in his 12th season, said the way Staley has explained his system and philosophy has been the best he has experienced in the league.

Joseph isn't the only player to share that sentiment.

"Coach Staley is very open. He brings it to us, his plan. He listens to us, and he sees how we see it, too. He asks how we see it," safety Derwin James said. "We are constantly communicating, and that's what makes him so great as a coach. It's not just, 'Hey, you do it this way.' It's both ends of the stick."

Staley's first win as an NFL coach came on Sept. 12, when the Chargers rallied in the fourth quarter to defeat the Washington Football Team 20-16. It also was on what would have been Linda Staley's 64th birthday.

"That meant everything. That would have been the 18th birthday we celebrated without her, and this is the first one where I haven't been sad," Jason Staley said. "As a brother, that's the best gift he could have given. She loved watching us play sports."

Jason Staley said seeing his brother have the platform to reach and inform others about cancer awareness is more important than the wins and losses on the field, especially during the league's many cancer awareness programs in October.

It goes back to when they were 12 years old, sitting at a kitchen table and hearing that their mom had breast cancer.

"His goal is for the 12-year old kid that gets this news in 2021, that they don't have the same outcome we did," Jason Staley said. "From a platform standpoint, the most important thing is just his ability to make a difference and keep my mom's memory and legacy alive."

The Chargers come into Monday night's game 2-1 after a thrilling 30-24 victory at Kansas City gave them their first 2-1 start in nine years. While Justin Herbert has directed a pair of fourth-quarter comebacks this season, the defense, where Staley still calls the plays, has set up the drives with takeaways.

The Raiders, who are expected to have a large contingent of fans at the Hollywood Park stadium, are 3-0 for the first time since 2002. Derek Carr leads the league with 1,203 passing yards entering Week 4 and has led Las Vegas to two overtime wins.

While Staley is still emerging and adjusting to being an NFL head coach, he has already helped others going through their cancer journey. He met a Chargers season-ticket holder who was

recently diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma during an event in April.

"You need to see other examples of why you should believe that you can do it," Staley said. "I think hopefully, from me, they can see somebody that — I'm just a kid from Perry, Ohio. I was in Division III five years ago. You can live your dreams; you can do anything that you dream of if you believe in yourself."

Unlikely interview set Brandon Staley on journey from St. Thomas to head coach of the Chargers

By Mark Craig
Minneapolis Star Tribune
November 12, 2021

Brandon Staley, the 38-year-old cancer survivor who raised the Rams' defense to No. 1 a year ago and now has the Chargers atop the AFC West as a rookie head coach, essentially began his coaching career 12 years ago while sitting in his car at a truck stop in Beloit, Wis.

He couldn't bring himself to cross back into Illinois because of something University of St. Thomas head coach Glenn Caruso had told him hours earlier during an interview for an opening to coach the Tommies' defensive line and special teams.

"Brandon was a longtime quarterback, an offensive guy who was working in administration as a graduate assistant on Jerry Kill's staff at Northern Illinois," Caruso said. "I think he was wondering, 'Why does this guy have me up in St. Paul interviewing for a defensive job?'"

"But I liked him right away. I said to him, 'I'm going to offer you the job, and I think you're going to call me before you get to the Illinois state line, and I think you're going to accept it.'"

It was early 2009. Staley, born Dec. 10, 1982, in Perry, Ohio, was 26. He was two years removed from beating Hodgkin's lymphoma with chemo treatments at the Cleveland Clinic. And he was closing in on asking his girlfriend, Amy, to marry him.

"I pulled over because I had to make sure it was OK with my future wife," Staley said last week when asked about his fateful pit stop along I-90 West. "I knew Amy was probably going to have to stay back in Chicago while I took that job in St. Paul. I wanted to make sure we were a team that could make it happen."

"Also," he added, "I didn't want to waste time and have Glenn take the offer away from me. Meeting him, I knew he operates fast."

Staley got the job and spent the 2009 season in St. Paul helping Caruso continue turning the Tommies from the 2-8 team he inherited in 2008 to 11-2 and Division III regional finalists two seasons later.

From there, Staley's whirlwind race to the top of his profession included stints as associate head coach and defensive coordinator at Hutchinson (Kan.) Community College (2010-11); graduate assistant at Tennessee (2012); defensive coordinator and secondary coach at John Carroll University in Ohio (2013, '15-16); defensive coordinator and secondary coach at James Madison (2014); outside linebackers coach with the Bears (2017-18); outside linebackers coach with the Broncos (2019); defensive coordinator with the Rams (2020); and head coach of a Chargers team that's 5-3 and plays host to the Vikings (3-5) at SoFi Stadium on Sunday.

Sleeping in a car in Mobile

Staley played quarterback at Perry High School, the University of Dayton and Mercyhurst (Pa.) University. His graduate assistant stint at Northern Illinois started in 2006, two years before Kill's staff arrived from Southern Illinois.

"I think he was video coordinator when we got there," said Tom Matukewicz, who was Kill's linebackers coach and is now the Southeast Missouri State head coach. "In the transition, I basically fell in love with the guy and took him under my wing. There wasn't a lot of on-field coaching for him, but he was kind of my right-hand man."

So how in fact did the young administrative assistant and former quarterback end up interviewing for D-Line and special teams coach?

Well, it all started when Matukewicz and Caruso's defensive coordinator, Wallie Kuchinski, met and hit it off at a coaching clinic.

"Tom Matukewicz became a guy I really trust," Caruso said. "He called me out of the blue."

Staley says that call eventually changed the trajectory of his career, challenging him to grow and become a more well-rounded coach who learned to see the game not just from a former quarterback's perspective.

But first Caruso had to be convinced to grant the interview request in the first place.

"I came at it pretty strong in that call to Glenn," Matukewicz said. "I said, 'Hey, just do me this favor. Interview him. And if you don't hire him, I'll pay for the interview.'"

Matukewicz laughs when he hears people call Staley "an overnight sensation" after the Rams led the NFL in yards allowed (281.9) and points allowed (18.5) last year.

"I was there when he went to the Senior Bowl and slept in his car because he didn't have any money for a hotel," Matukewicz said. "My wife and I gave him gas money, but we didn't have money for a hotel."

"Brandon and Amy made a lot of sacrifices. Brandon isn't a silver spoon. He's made it because he's worked his butt off and he's great at leading and teaching football."

Cancer survivors bond

Staley and twin brother, Jason, grew up in a home where teaching and football were intertwined. Bruce, the dad, coached football. Linda, the mom, was a teacher.

Cancer first struck the home when Bruce was diagnosed while the twins were in grade school. A few years later, Linda was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Bruce survived. Linda lost her nine-year battle when Brandon was at the University of Dayton. Three years later, Brandon, then 24, received his diagnosis.

"When Tom called me about Brandon, he said, 'This young man has gone through a ton of struggles in his life, and he's overcome them all,'" Caruso said. "He's tough. The year Brandon was here, we're getting ready for our first playoff game. We're sitting around talking about this very good opponent and their very fancy schemes and plays and all that."

"At the end of the meeting, I ask if anyone has anything to add. Brandon stands up with his clipboard in his hand and says, 'I heard a lot about schemes tonight, but no one said this team is tougher than we are. Let's go win.' And we did."

Staley looked back on that season last week and credited Caruso and St. Thomas with giving him a solid foundation he still leans on.

"Glenn is the total package," Staley said. "All you have to do is look at what's happened there since he arrived. That year allowed me to see up close what a real head coach should look like. I have so much respect for those guys. St. Thomas has a blueprint that I really believe in."

Staley stays in touch with Caruso and others at St. Thomas. Last year, Caruso and his wife, Rachael, went to Tampa to watch Staley's defense beat Tom Brady and the Buccaneers.

There's another side to Staley's relationship with the Carusos, one that had Glenn choking up.

"In 2017, we're getting ready for the playoffs and Rachael goes in for a routine checkup and we find out that she has Stage 3 colorectal cancer," Caruso said. "Brandon would pray for Rachael daily. Brandon would text Rachael, and it's not like he didn't have other things going on because he's coaching in the NFL."

"If he knew she was going in for chemo, he would just send a note and say, 'Hey, I'm thinking about you. I love you. I'm with you.' If there was a surgery, I swear he would be the first one to be calling after the surgery as I'm sitting there in the waiting room."

Staley heard those words and said, "From my experience, I just know that you can't do it alone. ... Those guys are amazing people. They just mean a lot to me."

To this day, that interview with Staley back in 2009 has stuck with Caruso.

"Nowadays, when I want to strongly recommend someone for a job, I think back to Tom Matukewicz calling me about Brandon," Caruso said. "I pick up the phone and say, 'Just bring him in and if you don't hire him, I'll pay for the interview.' That sure worked with Brandon."

Column: Well versed on Chargers curse, Brandon Staley might be the coach to end it

By Dylan Hernandez
LA Times
September 8, 2021

A well-regarded sports executive once told me that only an idiot would judge a coach based on what he says at his introductory news conference.

Almost eight months after Brandon Staley was hired by the Chargers, every time the rookie head coach speaks publicly is basically an extension of that news conference. His team has yet to play a real game; most of what the former Rams defensive coordinator says is theoretical. Until he wins a game, his words are just words.

Nonetheless, as Staley spoke recently under a giant tent next to the Chargers' practice field, he made a convincing case for why he'll be the man who removes the longstanding curse afflicting the team.

The first step in solving a problem is acknowledging there is one — and Staley is acknowledging their wretched history.

"I think what people don't do a good enough job of is admitting what's out there," Staley said. "What I've tried to do is confront the truth head on with these guys. Like, hey, people do think that you're cursed."

Wait, he has addressed this with his team?

"Oh yeah," Staley said.

Curses don't exist. Staley knows that. But he also knows how a franchise's past can affect the mood of a fan base in times of crisis, how a sense of fatalism in the stands can gradually seep onto the field until the negativity becomes inescapable.

"I'm a former cancer patient," Staley said. "So are both of my parents. There is no such thing as a person with bad luck. It's just life. It's what you make of it. We'll write our story, based off the people that are here and how we do things."

Makes sense. Much of what Staley says does.

The 38-year-old Staley, who was the defensive coordinator at John Carroll University just five years ago, is an engaging communicator. He speaks in grammatically-correct sentences, which doesn't seem like a big deal until you consider how few people do.

His players rave about how smart he is. So do the reporters who cover him every day.

"I love the way he talks," receiver Keenan Allen said. "He talks with passion, energy and confidence."

Staley also has a potential generational quarterback in Justin Herbert.

"Quarterback helps a lot," Staley said. "Your odds of playing in the Super Bowl aren't very good if you don't have a premium quarterback. If you don't, you have to be loaded everywhere else. It's just hard to do."

Herbert passed for 4,336 yards and a rookie-record 31 touchdowns last year after being a first-round pick.

"Normally, when you see someone that is as talented as Justin, they will tell you size, arm strength," Staley said. "But that's not what people talk about. What they talk about first is intangibles, how sharp he is, what a hard worker he is, how humble he is. And that's how I know he'll be a special guy because he has the tangibles on top of premium talent."

Staley especially likes how hard Herbert is on himself.

"That's what great competitors have, that perfectionist [mentality]," Staley said. "An artist can spot his own flaw before anyone else can. But not only can he identify it, then what he does is he goes out and takes care of it every day. He's the last one on this practice field every day. He's the last one every day. He's the first one in our building every day and he has that competitive stamina to bring his game to life."

Herbert was upbeat about how he prepared for his second season by facing a Staley-designed defense in training camp.

"He'll talk about their defense and explain, 'This is why we play it, this is how the safeties will play it,' and how to beat it," Herbert said. "Those are great conversations because I'm new to this league. To learn whatever I can and be around that, he's a guy that knows so much, so that's super helpful."

The Chargers are hoping Staley will be a defensive version of his previous boss, Rams coach Sean McVay. In his lone season with the Rams, Staley coached a defense that gave up the fewest points and yards in the league.

Staley will have players to work with on the Chargers' defense, so long as the group remains healthy.

All-Pro safety Derwin James was sidelined last season recovering from a knee operation. Defensive end Joey Bosa sat out four games because of two separate concussions.

"They hold their disguise so well and they're always showing [coverage] shell," Herbert said. "It puts the offense in a tough position because everything looks the same and you're not really able to pick up where the pressure is coming from, where to slide to and who to point. Just seeing all of that, it doesn't get much more complicated than that, so I have really appreciated that."

How Staley deploys Bosa could be critical, as Melvin Ingram's departure to the Pittsburgh Steelers will allow blockers to focus more on him. Bosa said he liked the culture Staley was creating, something that will be critical when hardships strike.

"He's a genuine guy and he really wants that out of his players," Bosa said. "I don't think that there's any surprises — when we hit some adversity, we'll see what we're all made of together — but, right now, I like his energy. I don't see it as a fake or forced thing. I think he's learned from some of the best coaches in the league, so he likes to emulate that kind of stuff. I think he's really genuine. Personally, I really appreciate that."

Staley has said all the right things so far. The question is how that will translate on to the field.

Brandon Staley gets Chargers to buy in with collaborative culture

By Gilbert Manzano
Orange County Register
July 27, 2021

Brandon Staley was introduced as the Chargers' head coach, but he looked the part of a motivational speaker by comfortably engaging with about 100 high school athletes during a football camp at Long Beach Poly High earlier this month.

Staley noticed three-time Super Bowl champion Willie McGinest standing to his left while he spoke about building relationships and seizing opportunities.

"I told the group, when you're around guys like Willie McGinest, you need to take advantage of that opportunity and introduce yourself," Staley said about the Long Beach area legend who attended Poly and USC before winning championships with the New England Patriots. "You need to be around a guy who comes from where you come from and has achieved all that he has."

"I know I'm going to introduce myself after this because I know that there's things I'm going to learn from him."

Staley learned plenty from McGinest after a lengthy introductory chat about what it takes to win a Super Bowl and how to make a lasting impact in Southern California.

Staley plans on sharing that knowledge from McGinest – and everything he's learned in the past seven months since being hired as the Chargers' head coach – to his 86 players who were expected to report Tuesday for the start of training camp. Staley's first camp practice as a head coach is Wednesday at Jack Hammett Sports Complex in Costa Mesa.

A RELATIONSHIP-DRIVEN COACH

Staley, 38, has quickly made a name for himself as an innovative coach constantly looking to learn from others by forging genuine relationships. His giving-and-receiving approach has led to a meteoric rise since earning his first NFL coaching job with the Chicago Bears in 2017.

He's no longer the assistant coach pushing for a head coaching gig, but he continues to have the same approach and isn't leaning on his impressive credentials, which includes turning the Rams into the top-ranked defense in the NFL last season during his one-year stint as defensive coordinator.

Staley spent the offseason listening and encouraging feedback from his new Chargers players and coaching staff to gain trust and create a collaborative environment.

"It's a position that he has been working really hard for," Chargers edge rusher Joey Bosa said about his first impressions of Staley. "Now, he gets to be the head guy and run things exactly how he wants to. He wanted us to know how confident he is in us as players and how much he trusts us. He's really open to talking and suggestions. It's a great relationship that he's building so far."

Staley's defensive scheme produced winning results with the Rams, but he spent months tweaking it to fit the strengths of the Chargers' defensive roster that features Pro Bowlers Bosa, safety Derwin James and cornerback Chris Harris Jr. and emerging linebackers Kenneth Murray and Drue Tranquill. Staley took the foundation of his defensive system from Broncos coach Vic Fangio when he was his outside linebackers coach in Denver and Chicago from 2017 to 2019. But Staley didn't attempt to replicate Fangio's scheme and added his own wrinkles.

"He is his own man," said Harris when asked to compare Staley to Fangio. Staley coached Harris with the Broncos in 2019. "He is doing it the way that he wants to do it. He's more relational than Vic (Fangio). Vic is kind of closed-door. You have to work your way in with Vic. Coach Staley, he is just a very sociable guy."

Although Staley was assigned to the outside linebackers, he often asked Harris for advice during their lone season together in Denver.

"We talked all of the time, all through the year and during the season," said Harris, a four-time Pro Bowl cornerback. "He would pick my brain, 'Chris, what would you do in this coverage? What did you think on this?' We would just talk football all of the time. From there, I knew that he was a very intelligent coach. He was a very relationship-driven coach. Guys liked him."

"Then Coach Fangio always had opportunities for his assistants to have presentations. Coach Staley always had amazing presentations and always kept everybody upbeat on what he was presenting. From there, I knew that he would definitely have a great chance to be a head coach."

BLENDING IDEAS

Staley, who overcame cancer after being diagnosed with Hodgkin lymphoma at 24, presented himself as a friendly and talkative coach during a 90-minute introductory news conference with Chargers reporters in January.

Chargers assistant coaches and players have yet to see Staley shout in anger and many don't expect that to change when the games arrive – win or lose.

Defensive backs coach Derrick Ansley first worked with Staley in 2012 at the University of Tennessee when Staley was a graduate assistant. Ansley said Staley's friendly personality hasn't changed in the past decade.

"He always came off very humble, very eager to learn and asked a lot of good questions," Ansley said. "You could tell at that age that he was going to go on to bigger and better things. He was always impressive from Day 1. He hasn't changed one bit."

Staley is the latest 30-something NFL head coach with a calm demeanor. He quickly meshed with Rams coach Sean McVay last season because of their similar personalities. Staley will use what he learned from competing against McVay during Rams practices to form the best offensive system for quarterback Justin Herbert, the reigning Offensive Rookie of the Year. But Staley, a former college quarterback at Dayton and Mercyhurst University, will also collect past experiences from his coaching staff.

Quarterbacks coach Shane Day has recent success from working with Kyle Shanahan and the San Francisco 49ers the past two seasons. Offensive line coach Frank Smith made a lasting impact as a tight ends coach with the Las Vegas Raiders and was instrumental in Darren Waller's development. Offensive coordinator Joe Lombardi spent 12 of the past 14 seasons working in New Orleans with Saints coach Sean Payton, who has operated one of the most productive offenses in the NFL since 2006.

"It's been really fun to work with him because he's one of the few guys that's a defensive head coach but also played quarterback," Day said about Staley. "That's a very unique experience. I've really enjoyed having our conversations because he's bringing a lot to the room. He's shared a lot of defensive perspectives with the quarterbacks. When he's able to frame it from a quarterback's perspective, that really helps us integrate it into our thought process. I've really enjoyed a lot of our conversations."

Staley has been busy blending ideas from different perspectives to create a successful operation on the field, but it always goes back to relationships for the coach from Perry, Ohio. Taking the time to get to know his players away from football is how he got the Chargers to quickly buy in, despite his lack of head coaching experience.

BUYING IN

James immediately realized his good friend and Rams cornerback Jalen Ramsey was right about Staley when the two had their first conversation during Staley's tour of the Chargers' facility.

"Everything that I've heard, and everybody I've met through this game, had nothing but great things to say about (Staley)," James said. "Our first talk on his first day here, the day he signed with the Chargers, I remember him just bringing me up here and wanting me to be a part of his moment. For me, it's just relationships. Everything that's been said has been spot on."

Staley has embraced backgrounds and personalities by letting players be themselves. He refers to cornerback Michael Davis by his nickname "Vato," which is Spanish slang for man.

"That's what he likes to be called," Staley said about Davis, who's half Mexican. "If you know Vato, that's such a big part of his story. What you try to do is you try to tap into that, and I think what's so cool about learning L.A., Southern California is that Mexican American, that Latino population is such a huge part of the fabric of this place and what makes it so cool."

"So the fact that we have a player that's half Mexican and what that means to people, because he's so proud of his heritage, yeah, I'm going to tap into that."

Staley has made all the right moves when it comes to building relationships and installing his systems this offseason, but the next phase of his challenge as a first-time head coach is getting his team prepared during training camp as games quickly approach.

RELYING ON TRUST

Staley will have plenty on his plate as the team's defensive play caller, but he plans on leaning on the trust he has with his coaching staff, specifically defensive coordinator Renaldo Hill, who will be in the booth while Staley calls plays on the field.

"I've learned so much from him and we have such a strong professional relationship and personal relationship," Staley said about Hill. "I think having that upstairs perspective as a coordinator, there's going to be things that I think he can help me with between series. ... He can talk to the defensive staff from an adjustment standpoint when my big-picture focus then transitions to (special) teams or offense and I think we've done a lot of trial runs in the spring camp.

"I can't emphasize how special of a coach he is and how much he's meant to our staff and our players."

Staley has quickly risen through the coaching ranks because he listens and wants others to succeed with him. That formula helped him as a small-program college coach at John Carroll University and James Madison and he hasn't gone away from that in the NFL.

The relationships and trust Staley has created since being hired as head coach will dictate how the Chargers go in 2021.

Chargers' new leader a family man: 'I am from the Bruce and Linda Staley coaching tree'

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
February 5, 2021

It was a single line — just 10 words — from a news conference that stretched beyond an hour and a half:

"I am from the Bruce and Linda Staley coaching tree."

When Detroit unveiled its new head coach on Jan. 21, the guy talked about biting kneecaps and kicking teeth, Dan Campbell's bizarre fit of passion stirring national attention.

On the same day, just a short time later, almost no one noticed when Brandon Staley was introduced by the Chargers and talked about his mom and dad, calling them "my heroes."

This is a coach whose first NFL job came with the 2017 Chicago Bears and noted defensive mind Vic Fangio.

When he was coaching collegiately at John Carroll, Staley was so enamored with Fangio's concepts that he would finish his meetings and game-planning, and rush off to study whatever Fangio was up to next.

Back then, Fangio was San Francisco's defensive coordinator and catching the 49ers on television in Ohio sometimes meant having to go to a nearby sports bar, where Staley would sit alone in wonderment.

After the 2018 season, Fangio left Chicago to become the head coach in Denver and took two assistants with him. One of them was Staley.

Barely a year later, Staley was hired by the Rams to be their defensive coordinator and brought along everything he had learned from his handpicked mentor.

Still, when asked to declare his roots, Staley put family over football, which is understandable given how much this family, bonded by hard reality, has persevered together and kept alive a tradition of teaching.

"I am from the Bruce and Linda Staley coaching tree."

That is Brandon Staley's line and this is the story behind that line.

Everyone else saw him coaching Jalen Ramsey that day, in a moment especially poignant and peeved.

Television cameras showed Staley reasoning with the Rams' all-everything cornerback shortly after Green Bay had taken a one-touchdown lead on an Aaron Rodgers pass.

Ramsey, his team en route to a crushing 32-18 NFC divisional-round playoff loss last month, was visibly upset on the field and now well short of pleased on the sideline.

Sitting at home just outside Pittsburgh, nearly 700 miles from Lambeau Field, Jason Staley watched his twin brother coaching, too, but saw something else entirely.

He saw the woman whose impact was so profound on the Chargers' new coach that it resonates still today, nearly 17 years after her death.

"Watching Brandon teach those guys, I get a little bit of my mom back," Jason said. "I get to see that, and it's just so cool. It's the reason I pay whatever DIRECTV charges me to get his games."

Linda Staley taught sixth-grade English in northeast Ohio before the breast cancer won, ending her 9½-year battle against a disease doctors estimated would take her life in less than one year.

Bruce Staley also was a teacher — fourth-grade math — before he and Linda learned their first child instead would be children, twin boys. A combined annual income of \$22,000 wasn't going to work for a household about to double in size.

So Bruce took a second job that eventually became a second career in adhesive materials. He was a coach, too, mostly AAU basketball, working with the twins from fifth grade through their junior years at Perry High, about a 45-minute drive from Cleveland.

He always had an even, measured demeanor on the bench and an equally steady point guard on the floor, Brandon possessing sublime ball-handling skills and the sort of passing ability that led to him setting assist records in high school.

Two decades later, while watching the Rams play the Packers, Jason said he laughed more than once at the images of his brother at work.

"He looks like my dad, kind of stalking the basketball sideline," Jason, 38, said. "It's like a flashback: 'That's my dad. That's what he would do.'"

Brandon knew only two positions growing up: point guard and quarterback. He was the sort of player who almost never was taken out of a game. He was athletic but — at 6 feet, 160 pounds — there just wasn't enough of him.

So he ended up at Dayton, which plays non-scholarship football, arriving as a fifth- or sixth-stringer. During that first year, buried on the depth chart, Brandon attempted to walk on to the school's Division I basketball team. He made the final two before being cut.

He'd end up starting for two seasons in football, operating the Flyers' option offense, being voted a captain and winning 16 of 21 games.

"He was as good as any player we had on the chalkboard," said Mike Kelly, Dayton's coach at the time. "He would always ask why. Most athletes don't ask why. It's, 'OK, Coach, got it,' and they just go to it. Brandon wanted to know why all the time."

The call to return home came during Brandon's junior year. It was his father. Mom was dying. Originally diagnosed with 21 cancerous lymph nodes, Linda's fight had been an extended and courageous one.

The disease showed up when the twins were 11 and not quite two months after they'd lost an aunt, Ann Maltarich, also to breast cancer. The first two years weren't as bad as the seven that followed as Linda's condition intensified, even as she long outlived the forecasts.

"An incredible will," said Bruce, a two-time cancer survivor himself. "Nothing ever negative, either. Not a 'why me' kind of thing. Incredible resolve. Just graceful. That's what I saw."

Linda would spend weeks at a time in the hospital, typically isolated and communicating with her three children — the Staleys have a younger son, Michael — mostly through journals the boys would write.

So they didn't always see the pain, but seeing the struggle was as unavoidable as the sound of their mother in the bathroom getting sick again. Jason said he never saw his father cry, those tears also coming only in private.

"That kind of fight leaves a mark," Jason said. "As kids, you see that and there's no way that doesn't affect you. When you think back to how they handled it and how she fought, those are the things that empower us."

At his introductory news conference, Brandon called his mother "the most graceful, loving, strongest person I know." He also said she remains his inspiration today "as a coach, as a father, as a husband."

He didn't include "as a teacher" but only because there's little difference between teaching and coaching to Brandon, who became more than a son to Linda after she was diagnosed. He and his brothers also became her students.

No longer able to work, Linda taught her sons instead, showing them the importance of building relationships with students and recognizing how each one learns and then using that foundation to build something special.

"She's the best teacher I've ever seen, certainly," Brandon said. "She was always able to reach people that were more difficult to reach. Seeing that up close when I was a little kid, I saw the power in that. I've tried to embody a lot of that as a coach."

The lesson remains powerful today and so, too, does the memory of Linda's goodbye. Jason said the turnout at her funeral was eye-opening in the number of lives his mother touched, all that love expressed after she died on Valentine's Day 2004.

Two busloads of players arrived from Dayton and two more from Mercyhurst College, where Jason played linebacker and was student body vice president. Jason that day even had to help a few of his teammates tie their ties.

"You would have thought the funeral was for a superstar," Bruce, 63, said. "The line to get in this place was unbelievable. It was more than you could have hoped for. I'm sure she would have been thrilled."

Mercyhurst is a small liberal arts school in Erie, Pa., hardly known for its athletes but famous for its underdog. Former heavyweight champion Buster Douglas was recruited to play basketball for the Lakers in the early 1980s before giving up hoops for boxing.

In 2005, the school was home to another long shot — a reunion of the Staley twins, Brandon transferring to play football with his brother one final time, both now graduate students.

They lived together and worked out together, even took a class together. Jason had considered not using his final season of eligibility, but Brandon talked him out of it.

Marty Schaeztle wrote all about the twins that season for one of the school's game-day programs. He knew their story well since Schaeztle also is the Lakers' football coach.

"I think once they lost their mom, they really realized the value of family and time," he said. "I think they believed it would be a very good thing to play one more time together. We were fortunate to be able to make that happen."

Brandon practically dragged Jason to watch film with him and catch his passes. As one of the team's new captains, Jason had no choice but go along, refusing to be outworked by someone who had just arrived on campus.

He also had no interest in looking bad in front of his big brother. See, Brandon is the older twin, by two minutes. Still, there were times when big brother was almost too driven.

"He was a classroom rat, a film rat," Schaeztle recalled of Brandon. "It was natural for him to try to put everything together, from the protections to the routes to what was going on in the backfield. It came to him very naturally."

By that point, Brandon was on his coaching path and, the next year, was a graduate assistant at Northern Illinois. Those 2006 Huskies made the Poinsettia Bowl.

It was on that trip to San Diego that the night sweats and the flu-like symptoms turned worse. Brandon, who also had a growth in his chest, called his dad, and Bruce remembers telling him, "You need to get home and get home now."

The doctors determined it was lymphoma.

"As a twin brother, it's the worst day of your life, scariest moment of your life," Jason said. "I'm feeling guilty because I don't have it. I would have given anything, anything to take that cancer out of him and put it into me."

These twins would eventually serve as each other's best man. They got engaged only two weeks apart and married just six weeks from one another.

They competed plenty as kids but, more often, teamed up. Brandon was always the better athlete. Yet, to this day, the only thing that really bothers Jason is the fact that Brandon, despite being an inch shorter, was the one who could dunk a basketball.

Brandon now calls the six months of chemotherapy and six weeks of radiation that followed his "cancer journey." He phoned his twin brother after every treatment, reassuring Jason that things would work out, the patient also the healer.

As a former college quarterback evolved into an NFL defensive coordinator, Brandon has been touted for his ability to see football from both sides. His vision goes even deeper than that.

"I looked at it as a chance to compete," Brandon said of his diagnosis. "It was a chance that could really bring out all the best in me. When you get to the other side of it, there's an energy, there's a strength, there's a feeling that you can do anything that you dream of. That's what I've been trying to do every day since."

And now, he's the Chargers' head coach, a young, sharp leader ready to pair with Justin Herbert, the team's young, sharp quarterback.

Brandon's first call after accepting the job was to his wife, Amy. His second was to Herbert.

On the day he was introduced by the Chargers, Brandon called Herbert again, this time for a video chat, explaining later that he wanted to loop in his quarterback as a way of gaining Herbert's trust.

The call included not only Brandon but also Amy and couple's three young sons — Colin, Will and Grant.

"That meant a lot to me," Herbert said. "He had so many other things to do that day. To set aside some time like that was special. I thought that was a pretty cool moment."

They talked family and relationships before they talked football, this disciple of Vic Fangio leaning instead on the lessons from home, the lessons taught by his most favorite of teachers.

At the Perry Cemetery, a family friend recently hung a Chargers lanyard over Linda's gravestone and sent the twins a photo.

Thinking back to his mother, Brandon said, "She's not here, but she's with me."

And that won't change anytime soon, not for someone who comes from a coaching tree carved from his family tree.

A brother's promise and the D-II season that led Brandon Staley to the Chargers

By Daniel Popper
The Athletic
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Mitch Phillis was still learning, and like any 19-year-old college sophomore, he had questions. But he was afraid of asking a dumb one to his superior — in this case, his football coach.

Phillis had taken over as Division II Mercyhurst College's starting quarterback four games into the 2005 season. He was developing, there was no doubt about that. But his coach was demanding, and Phillis did not want to mar his progress with public embarrassment. So in the film room, as his coach toggled through cut-ups of an exotic defensive coverage, Phillis bit his tongue.

Luckily, he had a human answer key sitting next to him: Brandon Staley, a fifth-year grad transfer backup quarterback who, despite being only 22, already was an encyclopedia of football schematics. The film session would wrap up, and later, Phillis would find Staley in the locker room to ask the questions that had been eating at him. Staley would happily oblige: It was a split coverage, of course. Man on one side, zone on the other.

Problem solved. Embarrassment avoided.

Fifteen years before he was hired to lead the Los Angeles Chargers, Staley's remarkable capacity for teaching, distilling and communicating information already was there — it just had to be uncovered. He had started two games earlier in the fall while Phillis dealt with a training camp injury, but once Phillis was healthy, he returned under center, and Staley was faced with the finality of his playing career.

Instead of wallowing, though, Staley did what was natural, what he always was destined to do.

"He just started coaching," says his twin brother Jason.

Jason Staley was ready to break up with football. His mother, Linda, died on Valentine's Day in 2004 after a long battle with breast cancer. "She approached just a truly awful disease with an amount of grace that is really hard to put into words," Jason said.

Jason, a linebacker, spent the 2004 season at Mercyhurst that fall, but he had lost his desire to keep playing.

"I hit the point where I loved football but I wasn't in love with football anymore," he said. "That's a tough realization because you've been playing the game since you were 6. It's even tougher to make the decision to walk away."

Jason was done, and he told his brother, his "best friend" who had just finished his second winning season as Dayton's starting quarterback and who, like Jason, had one more year of eligibility

But his brother was having none of it. Brandon knew Jason would regret giving up that final season for the rest of his life. So he offered a solution.

"I'll come play with you," Brandon said.

"Excuse me?" Jason replied in shock.

Brandon could have stayed at Dayton. But the brothers, inseparable from birth, had spent the last four years apart. They were still grieving for their mother, a sixth-grade English teacher who had instilled in them the value of work ethic and empathy. Brandon wanted to be there for his twin. And so they decided to spend this final season at Mercyhurst, together.

Brandon graduated from Dayton in May. He was in Erie, Pa., days later, moving in with his brother for the first time since they were 18. Brandon picked up a summer job moving furniture around campus. And he picked up Mercyhurst's hefty playbook, literally and figuratively.

The first time Phillis sat down to watch film with Staley, he was surprised to realize the newcomer already had learned the Lakers' intricate pro-style offense.

"We did not have anybody like him," Jason said.

That was evident within days — in the weight room, on the field, in the film room.

"I probably learned more in that summer about studying opponents than I had in the prior four years combined," said John Egbert, a receiver on that 2005 team. "And it just really was evident that he was a different level of cat."

Brandon was instrumental in organizing regular 7-on-7 games between the Mercyhurst offense and defense, what Egbert described as "epic, epic duels" every Sunday. Those days were transformative for the whole team.

"A lot of competition," said Jeff Nowling, who entered 2005 as the starting quarterback. "A lot of jawing at one another."

Because most of the players grew up locally, those not staying on campus drove to Erie for those scrimmages, including Phillis, who came to a sudden realization about Brandon.

"This guy's been getting after it," Phillis said. "He knows the offense already. He's been working on that. He's not coming into camp, like, oh, I'll learn it in camp. He was someone that was like, I'm going to know this before camp, and he was on it."

Brandon galvanized the team to train harder and more frequently. He threw every day with teammates.

The day Brandon got to the Mercyhurst football office, Egbert walked into the weight room and saw his new teammate doing Olympic lifts with a barbell while balancing on one leg. Egbert looked on in bewilderment. What are you doing over there?

The previous summer, before Brandon's arrival, Egbert thought he had made dramatic strides through his workouts.

"We probably did half the amount of work that we did the summer that Brandon came in," Egbert said.

Trying to find any way to get on the field, Brandon took reps at safety during those 7-on-7 games to sharpen his defensive versatility. He had only ever played quarterback.

"He could play any position," Nowling said. "He was very athletic."

Brandon still spent enough time in the playbook to grasp the complex offense at warp speed.

"I remember within a week or two," Egbert said, "not only was he teaching concepts to the other QBs who had been in the room for one, two or in some cases three years, some of the offensive assistants, like our wide receivers coach, he was teaching things to."

Brandon Zangaro, a two-way player on that 2005 team, was not in Erie for the summer. When he arrived for the start of training camp, Brandon Staley had already mastered far more than just the quarterback's duties. He knew the responsibilities of every player on the field.

"You know his intelligence and his Xs and Os are next level within the first 30 seconds of speaking with him," Zangaro said. "You have a guy transferring in, there's going to be some skepticism. Who's this guy? He hasn't been here the past four years doing what we've all been doing. But that didn't happen, because everybody knew."

Including Joe Lombardi.

Lombardi joined the Mercyhurst staff in 2002 when Marty Schaezle took over as head coach. And though he was coaching at a small Division II liberal arts school, Lombardi, the grandson of legend Vince Lombardi, still had Super Bowl expectations.

"Every day, every week, it seemed like he thought he was in the NFL," Egbert said. "I think in his mind he was walking out to Heinz Field instead of Tullio Field in Erie, Pennsylvania."

Lombardi demanded perfect recall. He ran Bill Walsh-inspired perfect-play drills to end practice, where one minor misstep — like running a route at 14 yards of depth instead of 15 yards — required another repetition. He scripted his first 20 plays every game when no one in Division II was implementing that level of preparation.

One day at practice, Lombardi watched a play unfold that reminded him of a film clip he showed his team two months prior. He asked Phillis if he remembered it — well, more like demanded if he remembered it.

(This might explain why Phillis would go to Staley with his questions.)

"I was kind of like, 'Ummm, I don't remember that specific play,'" Phillis remembers. "He was the type that was like, 'How could you not remember that? If you see it once, you should know it forever.'"

Thinking back, Egbert still marvels at Lombardi's attention to detail.

"Football is in his blood," Egbert added. "But honestly, there's more football in his brain than in his blood."

Staley, meanwhile, was enthralled. The two football junkies connected almost immediately.

"I really fell in love with studying the game," Staley said of his time with Lombardi at Mercyhurst. "I felt like Joe was an outstanding teacher. I felt like he was really progressive at that time. I had never been around an offense like that, that really challenged the quarterback from a mental standpoint, from a preparation standpoint."

"I love that. I couldn't get enough of it."

Specifically, Lombardi offered a diverse and layered NFL-inspired playbook that differed from the option-heavy offense Staley ran at Dayton. The quarterback had much more control at the line of scrimmage, sometimes having as many as 20 possible audibles or checks at his disposal.

"He was always trying to learn," Nowling said of Staley. "He wanted to eat it up. So he asked a million questions. ... Brandon's questions sparked a different thought in Coach Lombardi."

"The way that Joe talked to Brandon, he knew he could put more on him than other guys," Egbert said. "He would feed him more, he would pick his brain more. He talked to him more as a peer than a player because he really respected his knowledge."

The connection grew over that season, and Lombardi trusted Staley's understanding of the offense. That formed an avenue to the field for Staley. With Phillis injured, Staley replaced Nowling, the starter, in the second half of the season opener with the Lakers trailing, 28-10, to Gannon. He led an early second-half touchdown drive, but four fourth-quarter turnovers prevented a comeback.

The following week, Staley entered for Nowling in the second quarter against Northern Michigan. He helped erase a five-point deficit, and Mercyhurst took its first lead of the season. But turnovers, again, were the culprit in a loss. Staley started the next week and nearly led the Lakers to a win over 18th-ranked Michigan Tech. He gained over 100 yards on the ground and threw for 192 yards, a touchdown and two interceptions.

Phillis then replaced Staley in the fourth quarter the following week with Mercyhurst trailing Northwood, 35-0. Staley's final snaps at quarterback came two weeks later in relief of Phillis against Ashland. Staley took snaps at quarterback in five of the first six games of the season. The Lakers went 0-7 to start the year. They had a young defense that gave up at least 40 points in seven of 10 games the season.

But the Staley-Lombardi relationship was a bright spot in the disappointment. Staley had earned that trust over the course of that season, in the film room and on the practice field, even after he lost the starting job for the second time.

"Brandon was just there," Jason said. "He showed up to every practice and soaked up everything from Coach Lombardi. It was like hell trying to stop him. ... He really knew he wanted to go into coaching after interacting with Coach Lombardi."

In 2009, when Staley was an assistant at Division III St. Thomas, he traveled to New Orleans to visit with Lombardi, then the Saints quarterbacks coach. Staley embedded in the Saints QB room for a week with Lombardi and Drew Brees. Lombardi long had been an advocate for Staley in NFL coaching circles, including with Ed Donatell, with whom Lombardi coached on the Falcons staff in 2006. Staley ended up getting his first NFL gig as the outside linebackers coach for the Bears in 2017 with Vic Fangio, and Donatell, a longtime Fangio assistant, was on that staff.

"He really taught me the game at a high level," Staley said of Lombardi. "Protections, the run game, how do these concepts fit together, how can we get in and out of plays. At that time, that's kind of where my love for coaching offensive football really came, was from him, because I loved playing for him and I learned so much and he made me better. And I think that we saw the game the same way, and that relationship has really stood the test of time."

"They were really good memories," Lombardi said. "He was awfully smart and fun to be around."

Staley's decision to play with his brother in turn helped facilitate the relationship that led to perhaps the most important hire of his life.

Justin Herbert's development is a priority as the Chargers enter a pivotal offseason. That responsibility will fall largely on the shoulders of his offensive coordinator: Joe Lombardi.

"There are so many coaching trees built up and circles crossing, and you hear about people hiring people they know all the time," Egbert said. "But this does seem unique, doesn't it?"

Zangaro broke his leg midway through the 2005 season and had a front row seat to Staley's transformation.

He watched practice as the backup quarterback, completely comfortable in his teaching role, groomed Phillis and connected with his teammates.

Staley was finding his coaching voice.

"He's got it. He's just got it," Zangaro remembered thinking at that moment. "The way that he communicates and his ability to communicate with different people at different levels, it was unparalleled."

Phillis' growth was most evident. And Zangaro, from his sideline seat, knew Staley played a crucial part.

Phillis, a self-proclaimed pocket passer, even scored a rushing touchdown that season when he pump-faked a linebacker and dove over the goal line. He said he picked up the move from watching Staley in training camp.

As Zangaro thinks back now, he witnessed a man born to coach football embarking on a journey that would carry him to the very pinnacle of the professional.

"You knew what he was going to do," Zangaro said, "and where he was going to go."

Brandon Staley Q&A: Chargers coach on developing player relationships, Justin Herbert, OTAs install and more

By Jourdan Rodrigue
The Athletic
July 12, 2021

OCEANSIDE, Calif. — Brandon Staley couldn't keep still.

The Los Angeles Chargers' head coach — hired away from the Rams in January and preparing to open his first NFL training camp in that role — stopped for a day at the QB Collective coaching and quarterback summit in Oceanside as the event's keynote speaker and to help facilitate an ongoing dialogue about scheme, philosophy and trends among several competing NFL coaches.

As the event unfolded Saturday morning, some coaches, including 49ers offensive coordinator Mike McDaniel, 49ers quarterbacks coach Rich Scangarello and Chargers defensive coordinator Renaldo Hill, sat around a large wooden table and dissected the merits of 49ers head coach Kyle Shanahan's offensive system and how it juxtaposes to and clashes schematically with Staley's defensive system — itself a mad scientist-escaped-from-the-laboratory amalgamation of Broncos defensive coordinator Vic Fangio's system. A dozen other coaches and league personnel sat on couches that were set up around the perimeter of the table, joining in the conversation and occasionally scribbling notes.

The young quarterbacks in the room stared wide-eyed at the coaches, their eyes darting back to Staley, who paced and gestured at the front of the room as he spoke about his background and offered advice on a player's journey to the NFL as well as a coach's. When the teaching portion ended and the quarterbacks left, film was turned on and the real chatter among the coaches began. The dialogue was respectful but rippled with electricity as they watched cut-ups of their teams clashing on a large screen positioned at the head of the table. Staley moved to one of the couches but would hop up to the table when the conversation got juicy, unable to help himself from quite literally jumping into the ideas presented.

That, as it turned out, was only the first part of his weekend. He also swung by a seven-on-seven tournament in Long Beach the next day. The Athletic caught up with him in between events to see how his first offseason as a head coach has gone, how he's developing relationships with his players — including, of course, collaborating with second-year quarterback Justin Herbert, the reigning NFL rookie of the year — what his approach to installing his plan in spring workouts has been and how he has set about planting the first seeds of his coaching philosophy as the Chargers prepare for camp on July 27.

Note: This conversation has been lightly edited for length and clarity.

You're about to jump into it. I know you've been preparing, and you had the draft and spring ball, but this is where it starts to get into the real year. Does it feel that way to you?

I think, from a head coaching perspective, that scheduling is really a big part of the job. I think that knowing how far in front of these things you have to be, from a planning and really from a performance standpoint — like some of these nontraditional weeks where you're going from a Sunday to a Thursday, a Sunday to a Monday, coming off a bye week, going into a bye week — some of that long-term planning and working with our coaching staff and our sports performance team and our personnel department, I think that makes you feel like, "Hey, this is coming. This is happening."

I pour a lot of time and energy into that because I want our players to know the reason behind everything we do. I feel like I put a lot of time and effort into organizing schedules, whether it's practice or installation or training camp — or some of these travel schedules, (like) going from a Pacific to an East Coast time slot where it's a 10 a.m. start time — and putting a lot of energy into that. That's been a big part of making it feel real. You're making these schedules because it's coming fast.

From a microscopic point of view, which is how I prefer to think about it, it's just about getting training camp off the ground. That's what's coming first. That's been a lot of fun for me. I feel like that's a sweet spot for me because I like being able to build things. That's been exciting.

What are a couple of moments in which you've started to see the building blocks you're stacking?

You know, over the summer, (safety) Derwin James had his first child. You know the depth of the relationship you have with him when he sends you the picture of that baby boy from the hospital. And at the same time, he's watching Washington Football Team film against the Rams! And, you know, asking questions about our game plan and what he's seeing on tape from them — while he's in the hospital. I think that shows you're maybe doing something right.

Just being able to connect with (receiver) Keenan Allen at the U.S. Open. I brought my brother in from Pittsburgh — he had just been named a partner at his firm — and so I surprised him with a trip out here to go to the third round of the U.S. Open. And being able to connect with Keenan at the tournament and walk the course with him and my twin brother, I think you have a strong sense of where you stand with a guy like that — how he has accepted you and where his frame of mind is — a guy who is one of the premier players in the game. Just so excited to compete with him. I feel like, in just a short amount of time, we've been able to get really close. Those are the things that I really, really enjoy.

With relationship-building being such a huge part of what you're doing now, how do you do that authentically?

I think you just do it slowly. I think you do it daily. I don't think it's ever one big moment, just a lot of little moments. I think it's just acknowledging everybody that you see and the small conversations that let everybody know that you're aware of them and who they are and listening to them.

We had Austin Proehl, who we signed (after the draft) from North Carolina, who is best friends with Mitch Trubisky (who Staley knew during his time in Chicago as an outside linebackers coach), who is from where I'm from in Ohio, and valuing him the same way that I do Keenan Allen and getting to know him. (Center) Corey Linsley, he had a baby a couple of weeks ago back in Columbus, and he was able to come back and forth during the spring. (His wife) Anna and my wife kind of got to know each other. So, you do the best you can with everybody and know that each relationship is different; it has a life of its own. And all you can do is make sure that you do the best you can with all of the people that you're with and knowing that they're all different. And the more you get to know them, you'll know how much or how little of a relationship you'll have with them. It can't be the same with everybody.

... But the fact that you have one is what's most important to me.

Really, I think (you can) learn a lot through your coaching staff. Your coaching staff can have a more intimate view of their position group. ... It's daily. That's a big part of your role as the head coach is to have the pulse of your team — not only your players but your coaching staff. It takes a lot of investment, and I'm sort of built for that. That's what I really like to do.

I even heard that offensive line coach Frank Smith moved his office so it's like an entry and exit point of the building for the linemen.

Yeah, we want to live the mission. We talk about "our way" being relationships and competition, and if that's going to be at the forefront of everything that we do, then each individual coach in their own way has to make that a big part of their own mission statement. I think why Frank is a special coach is that he understands how to connect with his guys. He understands what a dynamic group an O-line room is and how different all of these personalities are. And the best way that you can connect with people is being available — a great way to be available is to be with them.

Frank knows that sometimes when a player comes upstairs to a coach's office, he feels differently than when he's downstairs in a meeting room. It feels like a more welcoming environment where (they) can be themselves; (they) don't have to be sort of a manufactured self. You see that a lot in the NFL; people are putting on a front — they're playing a part in a movie — they're not necessarily being their authentic, full self. I think what (Frank) has done with our group is open himself up, and I think by doing that, it's opened them up. Now our lines of communication are open in a way that wouldn't be possible if he were upstairs all the time. They can stay later with him; they can come earlier. He has a central command center down there for them and with (assistant offensive line coach) Shaun Sarrett, and I think it's Frank's way of making the relationship part really big.

Do you think that helps, having multiple spaces like that where guys can just be around each other, learn about each other, understand each other — not just player to player but coach to player?

Yeah, and that's why I tell our coaches to go work out when the players are working out. I was like, "You'll be surprised what you can find out from observing them or being a part of a workout session where you can maybe talk about something just briefly that will end up helping your day out." I think a lot of people look down on that or laugh at me, turn their nose up, whatever. There's a lot of cynical people out there. What I encouraged our staff to do is to be around our guys if they're into what we're doing. ... If we can always stay current with them, then we're going to create a lot of solutions to these really tough problems that we're going to have. I don't believe in coaches hanging out together all day. I know that's not the way. The way is to be around your players as much as they can, and our coaches have kind of given life to that.

I shared a bunch of stories about when I was with (Rams star cornerback Jalen) Ramsey. I made a 90-play cut-up last March of him, from Florida State all the way to the 2019 Rams: good plays, bad plays, in the middle, press, off, tackling, effort, leadership stuff, his role for the Rams. On two hours, on a Zoom call in the beginning of the pandemic, that's where it started for us, because he knew that I was invested in his game. I shared with him, I said, "I don't think that I would be here without Jalen Ramsey." And it was a moment like that that led to a lot of other really big and small moments along the way that allowed him and us to have a great year — that let him know that you're thinking about him, that it's personal. I don't see how you can do this job if you don't make it personal. (Voice raises.) I just don't, Jourdan. I don't see how you can do it well.

I remember how collaborative your relationship with Jalen was, too.

I use that word — "express themselves" — because I mean it. It's a partnership. That's why I love the NFL. You have to make sure that that guy has a big voice in how you do things, because he can help you. He can see a lot of things that are happening out there that can really help you. You can say, "Hey, we can do this one of two ways." And then he makes the way that he wants work. We're always going to be wired that way. "We've got two really good solutions. What are you more comfortable with?"

I just think that's the best way to do business. And then you're always current during the week, and then when you get to the signal caller meetings that he and I had all the time, they were like quarterback meetings where he's ranking the third downs. "Hey, these are the coverages I like the best. This is where I want to be in the red area." So he's fully aware of why we're doing everything and there's no surprises for him on game day. I think that collaboration is ultimately why we had the year that we had. He had a huge impact on me.

And I want to tie that thread over to the other side because of your quarterback. If we're tying thread together, translating that type of collaboration over to Herbert, I imagine that's the most important thing you two can do is to collaborate in that manner.

A big part of it is that I know our offense. I know how we call things, I know why we call them that way, from a formation standpoint to a protection standpoint to a route concept standpoint, so I can speak his language on a day-to-day basis. And then, I feel like a big contribution from me is to help him identify defenses and how people play and what their rules are. "These are the personnel groupings that they play. These are their fronts they play, the coverages they play, the pressure packages they have. Here's a couple defenders who can tell you what's happening. Here's why it's happening." And offer him that second part of his education where, yeah, he's learning it from Joe (Lombardi) and Shane (Day). But I'm the checks and balances that offers him that other perspective — and a fresh perspective. And I think that with Justin, it's: "Do you prepare the path for the player or the player for the path?" And I want to prepare the player for the path, not the path for the player.

I don't want to make it easy for Justin; I want to make it right for him. And so on the front end, I'll say, "Hey, man, we're going to challenge you. We're going to push you." Because ultimately, I know that for us to be as good as we can be, (he) has to be the one running the show for us. And (him) just knowing that, as his head coach, I have his back and we're going to work through it during the week together and hopefully I can give him that full perspective where he can become a complete player.

When you guys talk, how do you talk to each other?

A lot of it is keeping it light, talking about our day to day. And I think that's where it starts: from a personal perspective. From a ball perspective. Just asking a lot of questions and being a part of the conversation and the dialogue. And he knows that my door is open and my cellphone is on for all of those things that come up for him. I think everyone wants to make it this big thing, but that's not how it is; they're little things. Little things that add up to the big things, and ultimately, that's where you know you trust one another — when it's not like (you're only reaching out over) big stuff. It's small stuff that happens over time.

I think, over the course of OTAs, what was awesome was being able to be in all of those quarterback meetings. I felt like Justin got a lot better. I felt like he learned a lot more about not only our offense but our defense. I could say, "Hey, this is why, offensively, we really like this. This is why we do this, because it's really good against this." When you can speak that part of the language, it's not like you're some sort of "defensive coach." You're just his coach. Right? And I think that's just a goal of mine was to establish, "I'm a coach. Not just a defensive coach." I'm his coach, just like I'm Derwin James' coach. And I've really enjoyed that.

Which phase of the on-field "building" process are you in right now?

We talked about in the springtime really trying to push it from an installation standpoint, to really introduce our football scheme, our technique and our situational foundation. What we wanted to do was teach our guys a lot of football and install a lot. We were not going full speed, so what we did was we two-spotted the field so that everybody on the team could be working. That was done intentionally so that everybody was developing. Not just part of the team; the whole team was developing. We didn't have to worry about the full speed of 11-on-11, the full speed of that, the anxiety, not to mention the health and safety stuff. What we were able to do was really install a lot more offense and defense. ... There's a lot of information that they're responsible for, so they have to come to the facility ready. They're responsible for a lot. So in a traditional OTA (practice), they may get 10 to 15 plays. Well, they were getting 65 to 75 plays that they were having to operate against a great offense or defense. If you just do the math on that, you're getting five times as many snaps every day.

On the front end, it was a lot harder for our players because we ended up installing as much defense as we had for the Green Bay playoff game (with the Rams). We ended up installing that much. But what it did was it introduced our players to what we do and why we do it. I think that our players, although it was challenging for them, they benefited greatly because now when it goes live in training camp, they know what to do because they've done it. There isn't anything they have not been exposed to from a baseline of installation, because at the end of the day, you just want these guys to be able to perform their best and express themselves, and then for you as a coaching staff to figure out what everyone is best at. We were able to establish our way of playing, and our guys are going to feel very confident in operating our systems in all three phases because we put a lot of stuff in. It wasn't smothering or overwhelming because the physical part wasn't a part of the equation. I felt like I got really good feedback from the players because we engineered this as a coaching staff first and then went to our (player) leadership council (about it).

As you saw last year with the Rams, I feel like we spent a lot of time thinking about how to build things. Like, a lot of time. Like, way more time than you could ever imagine. And I feel like that's why it usually works out OK. I think if you build things properly, you're going to be more prepared for all of the things you're going to (experience) in the league.

Mom's influence inspires ex-Flyer's meteoric rise to NFL head coach

*By Tom Archdeacon
Dayton Daily News
January 24, 2021*

The Dayton Flyers — who'd been on a 14-game winning streak — had suffered a heartbreaking, 33-28 loss to Valparaiso at Welcome Stadium.

Brandon Staley, UD's option quarterback, had thrown for 280 yards and two touchdowns, ran for 86 yards and another score and nearly orchestrated the comeback when he drove the Flyers the length of the field in the final minutes, only to have four straight passes fall incomplete in the end zone.

After the game, he had gone around the dressing room consoling several of his teammates, but before he would talk to me he said he had to step outside to make a phone call.

As he did after every game in that 2003 football season, Staley called his mom, Linda, who was back home in their small Lake County town of Perry.

She was too ill to be at the game, but as she'd tell me that evening when we spoke, listening to the radio broadcast of the Flyers' game and especially hearing her son's voice afterward was "some of the best medicine I can get now."

A longtime English teacher, she'd been diagnosed nine years earlier with breast cancer and by that late October game things had gotten "pretty tough" for her Brandon said.

Linda didn't hold back when we spoke.

"I had three chemo treatments a week ago and I feel OK, but I don't have much energy now," she said quietly. "My cancer has metastasized to my liver and I know it's kind of scary for my boys now. They know it can be brutal.

"But Brandon knows how much I look forward to Saturdays: Listening to what he's doing out there on the field, hearing them say his name, knowing he's on the Dean's List at school, it makes me so proud.

"Saturdays I have a smile on my face."

Less than four months later — on Valentine's Day 2004 — Linda Staley passed away. She was just 46 and left three sons and Bruce, her husband of 23 years. After that emotional call back home following the Valpo game, Brandon had talked about his mom:

"You could never tell what she's fighting through because... she never gives in, never gives up."

"I draw on her strength every day. She's my inspiration."

Now, fast forward 17 years and 3 months to this past Thursday afternoon, and you heard Staley say almost the exact same thing about his mom when the Los Angeles Chargers formerly introduced him at press conference as their next head coach.

"She was an inspiration to me as a player and she is an inspiration to me as a coach and as a father and as a husband," he said on the Zoom call. "There's no possible way I would be here if it weren't for her."

Many football observers were surprised by what some called the "meteoric rise" of the 38-year-old coach. He has been in the NFL just four years. Five years ago he was an assistant coach at John Carroll University, the Division III school on Cleveland's east side.

Before he was hired last Sunday to replace Anthony Lynn, he'd never been a head coach at any level.

The Chargers interviewed five other candidates, but Staley – who had spent the past season as the defensive coordinator on Sean McVay's Los Angeles Rams staff and made the defense No. 1 in the NFL – was impressive in their interviews, said John Spanos, the president of football operations:

"He's the son of a teacher and he's the son of a coach. One of my favorite parts of the first time we sat down with Coach Staley was when he said, 'People ask me what coaching tree I consider myself a part of.'

"This is a guy who coached with some great minds in football. He worked with Vic Fangio. He coached with Sean McVay. But he says, 'I'm part of the Bruce and Linda Staley coaching tree. That's my coaching tree.'

"And I think that says a lot about Brandon. It says a lot about his character, his values and who he is."

Back in 2003, Linda talked to me about football and her family: "Football is important to our whole family. Actually, we're pretty nuts about it."

That October day had been proof. While Linda was at home, Bruce was at Mercyhurst College where Brandon's twin brother Jason was a linebacker. It was Parents Weekend so he belonged there, but he wanted to know everything that was happening with Brandon, too.

"My husband and I had a phone call going and when Dayton was on offense, I'd hold my phone up to the Internet broadcast so Bruce could listen on his cell phone," she laughed. "I got pretty animated, so I don't know what he actually heard."

That spunk his mom showed that day was something Brandon would draw on four years later – in 2007 – when he was a grad assistant at Northern Illinois and a grapefruit-sized tumor was found on his right lung. By then he'd lost his mom and aunt to breast cancer and his high school coach to the disease as well, but his dad had overcome thyroid cancer and would do the same (recently) with prostate cancer.

Brandon was diagnosed with lymphoma and when the season ended he returned to Cleveland to undergo chemotherapy. He returned to NIU for spring football, then went back home to finish his six months of chemo.

When the next season began, he drove regularly to Chicago for six weeks of radiation.

His scheduled his treatments at 7 a.m. so he could get back to campus in time for afternoon practice.

"When I went through my cancer journey...I thought of it as a chance to really bring out the best in me," he said Thursday. "I think when you get to the other side of it, there is an energy, a strength. There is a feeling you can do anything you dream of."

"And that's just what I've been trying to do every day since."

'I never would have been able to do it alone'

"He's what I'd call a typical Dayton Flyers football player," said Mike Kelly, who was UD's celebrated head coach back then and today is an assistant athletics director at the school. "He came from a smaller school, was multi-talented and an outstanding student."

After a stellar career at Perry High School, he was redshirted his first year at UD and the following season he was a backup. Finally, in his third year – that 2003 season – Staley won the starting job and guided the Flyers through a 9-2 campaign.

In 2004, the Flyers had added Kevin Hoyng from Coldwater. He'd go on to become the program's all-time leader in career passing yards completions and touchdowns, but that season he and Staley split the starting duties. Although he graduated after that season, Staley still has a year of eligibility left.

"He knew he was going to be in a serious battle with Kevin, but we probably would have played both of them again," Kelly said. "Like any young man, he wanted the spot himself, but we couldn't guarantee that."

He decided to transfer to Mercyhurst, whose quarterbacks' coach was former Flyers assistant Joe Lombardi, now the QB coach of the New Orleans Saints.

It hadn't been easy for Staley to leave Dayton, especially because of the way people reached out to him when his mom died.

"We brought two busloads of players – maybe 50 or 60 guys – up to the funeral," Kelly said. "It was a very emotional time for Brandon and his family."

Staley reflected on that Thursday: "I never would have been able to do it alone."

But in going to Mercyhurst, he became the starting quarterback, got to play with his brother and was a lot closer to his dad since Perry was just 70 minutes away from the Erie, Pa. campus.

His dad had been a longtime high school coach and that's something that always intrigued Brandon.

"I started drinking coffee in the first grade and reading the sports page," he laughed. "I wanted to be just like my dad."

'The best teacher I've ever seen'

During spring football drills in 2003, Staley registered the highest vertical jump on the UD team. And in landing now with the Chargers, it's evident he hasn't lost his hops as a coach.

"I've been around for three decades coaching and every once in a while a young, bright guy who sees the game globally comes around," Ed Donatell, the Denver Broncos defensive coordinator and a two-time Super Bowl winner, told the Denver Post. "(Staley) sees offense, defense, special teams and he knows how they work ... It's an extraordinary job of teaching (to get the Rams defense atop the NFL.) He's a young, bright mind that sees it all and can communicate with people."

After starting out as a defensive assistant at Northern Illinois, Staley became a defensive line and special teams coach at D-III St. Thomas University in Minnesota, then spent two seasons at Hutchinson Community College in Kansas and year as a grad assistant at Tennessee.

In 2013 he was hired as the defensive coordinator at John Carroll. He made a one-season detour to James Madison, then returned to John Carroll. In 2016, he planned to join JCU coach Tom Arth at Tennessee-Chattanooga when Vic Fangio of the Chicago Bears called.

Two seasons later he followed Fangio to Denver and last season he was hired by McVay, whose granddad, John McVay, had been the Flyers coach for eight seasons in the 1960s and '70s and later, as San Francisco's VP and director of football operations, helped lead the 49ers to five Super Bowl titles.

"I hardly know anything about professional football, but what amazes me is it's such a tight knit group of people," Kelly said. "There's a lot of networking."

And the Dayton Flyers are now a part of that network. When he was 30, Sean McVay – who went to Ascension School in Kettering – became the youngest head coach ever in the NFL. At 33, he was the youngest Super Bowl coach.

Part of his grandpa's staff at UD was Jim Gruden, whose son Jon would be a back-up quarterback for Kelly's UD teams in the 1980s and later won the Super Bowl as the Tampa Bay Buccaneers coach. He now coaches of the Las Vegas Raiders. Before him, Chuck Noll, the former Flyers lineman of the 1950s, won four Super Bowls as the Pittsburgh Steelers head coach and is enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Jon Gruden now has Austin King, a former Flyers assistant, on his staff. And this evening former Flyers' center Terry Heffernan will help coach the Buffalo Bills line in the AFC title game against Kansas City.

Thursday somebody noted to Staley that he'd now be facing fellow Flyer Gruden twice a year in the AFC West. While he praised Gruden – "he's as good of a football coach as there is" – he also got in a puckish tweak: "We were both quarterbacks at Dayton, but I'll tell you that I was a little better quarterback than he was."

The Chargers hired him because of the way they believe he'll relate to his players and Staley was quick to give props to his mom for that:

"She was the best teacher I've ever seen. She had an amazing ability to listen. People just felt they could be themselves with her. She could really bring out the best in them ... I think seeing that up close when I was a kid, I saw the power in that. And certainly I've tried to embody a lot of that now as a coach.

"So even though my mom's not here, she's with me."

Once he lifted her. Now she lifts him.

Los Angeles Chargers' new coach Staley played quarterback for Mercyhurst University

By Mike Copper
Erie Times-News
January 23, 2021

Mercyhurst University football coach Marty Schaeztle likes to have his former players speak to current ones.

Schaeztle, who's run the Lakers' program since 2002, said it provides them a sense of what's possible to achieve once their playing days are done.

Brandon Staley, a quarterback for the 2005 Lakers, was among those who talked via teleconference to members of the 2020 team last spring.

Staley did so as the then-new defensive coordinator for coach Sean McVay of the Los Angeles Rams.

"It was nice for the players to hear about the challenges Brandon was having with COVID-19, while at the same time trying to install a defense around All-Pros like (Aaron) Donald and (Jalen) Ramsey," Schaeztle said. "I liked it because I think he realized we (Mercyhurst's coaches) were having the same sort of issues. I know our players certainly appreciated hearing him on that call."

The Lakers didn't know it at the time, but they were conversing with the same Brandon Staley who would go on to be hired by the Los Angeles Chargers as their new head coach last week. He'll take over SoFi Stadium's other NFL tenant as he leaves the Rams.

Schaeztle said he texted Staley, who turned 38 last month, throughout the Rams' 2020 season, which ended with their loss at Green Bay during last weekend's NFC divisional playoff round.

Schaeztle does hope to speak with Staley once the Perry, Ohio, native is better situated in his new job.

"This is exciting for our whole program," Schaeztle said, "but I think the most fun for me has been to see Brandon's former teammates being excited for him on social media. He played with a special group of athletes on the 2005 team. The seniors were part of my first (recruiting) class. They've all been very successful in their professions, and this is just another guy doing a great job in his profession."

Staley takes over for Anthony Lynn, whom the Chargers fired after they missed the playoffs their past two seasons. However, they seem positioned to have a better future based on the 2020 performance of rookie quarterback Justin Herbert, who set numerous NFL rookie passing records.

Staley's background could benefit Herbert, the sixth overall pick in last year's NFL draft.

Road to Mercyhurst

Staley played for Dayton (Ohio) University, where he started at quarterback for the Division I Flyers in 2003-04. He had one season of eligibility left when he graduated and, knowing twin brother Jason also had one season left with the Mercyhurst football team, joined the roster as a graduate student.

The Lakers, then members of the former Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, finished 2005 at 3-7 overall. Their losing record was due in part to a rash of injuries that included starting quarterback Mitch Phillis.

Staley dutifully filled in behind center when needed. He passed for 744 yards and six touchdowns and ran for another 173 and one score.

"The greatest thing he did that year was he came in on a team with fourth-year seniors," Schaeztle said. "They had something among themselves, but Brandon managed to fit in immediately. He understood the big picture, with some help from Jason. He amazed everybody."

"That's when I could tell he could do very well in (the coaching) profession because he knew about relationships."

Illness and adversity

Staley has gone from backup quarterback at a Division II program to NFL head coach before the age of 40.

While Staley's ascension was relatively swift, it wasn't without personal adversity.

Cancer has been an ominous presence throughout most of Staley's life. His mother, Linda, died from breast cancer in 2004 and his father, Bruce, recently recovered from prostate cancer.

Brandon Staley also is a cancer survivor. He was a graduate assistant at Northern Illinois in 2006, the year after he played for Mercyhurst, when he was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Staley discussed his family's plight during the Chargers' news conference Thursday.

"When I went through my own cancer journey, six months of radiation, I looked at it as a chance to compete," he said. "I thought it was a chance that could really bring out all the best in me. I think when you get to the other side of it, there's an energy. There's a strength. There's a feeling that you can do anything that you dream of, and that's what I've been trying to do."

Staley's initiative saw him rise from Division III assistant to NFL head coach in five years. He was the defensive coordinator for Ohio's John Carroll University when he was hired to coach the outside linebackers for the 2017 Chicago Bears.

Staley held that same position with the 2019 Denver Broncos. Despite the small coaching sample size, McVay heard enough talk and saw enough game video to hire him as the Rams' defensive coordinator for this past season.

Under Staley's guidance, the Rams led the NFL in total defense, passing defense and scoring defense.

Now, it's Staley who will do the hiring and fill out a staff for the 2021 Chargers.

Switching sides

Schaeztle said it's not as unusual as it sounds for someone who competed on one side of the ball as a player to excel at coaching on the other.

That Staley was a quarterback but made his rise through coaching ranks mostly on defense more plausible.

"There are certain positions in other sports, be it a point guard (in basketball) or a catcher (in baseball), where you need to understand the game as much as possible to be successful," Schaeztle said. "Playing quarterback all those years, Brandon probably built up an understanding of defenses and what gives (offenses) problems. There's no doubt that helped him, especially in his college (coaching) career."

As for Staley fulfilling his goal of becoming an NFL head coach, Schaeztle was unsure if that would happen.

But he also guessed, based on his one season at Mercyhurst, there were few reasons why it couldn't.

"Brandon was doing a very good job coaching at the Division III level," Schaeztle said, "but he made up his mind that he wanted to give coaching in the NFL a shot. Once he got in with Chicago, it didn't surprise me that he would be successful at that level. The key is always to get that break."

"Brandon had it in him because he has such passion for the game."

Los Angeles Chargers coach Brandon Staley makes sure to connect with QB Justin Herbert

By Shelley Smith
ESPN.com
January 21, 2021

New Los Angeles Chargers coach Brandon Staley made sure he didn't take too long to introduce himself to quarterback Justin Herbert, but priorities are priorities.

"I called him on my way back home," Staley said about who he contacted first when he learned Sunday that he would be the Chargers' head coach. "I promise I called [wife] Amy first, but then I called Justin because I wanted him to hear my voice. And I wanted him to know about my family ... and then I just wanted to listen for a little bit. Wanted him to hear my energy, maybe see a little bit of vision of what I have for what we want to get accomplished together."

The 38-year-old Staley said he FaceTimed with Herbert on the way to the Costa Mesa facility Thursday for the introductory news conference "because I wanted him to see us before our big day."

Staley was the coordinator for the Los Angeles Rams' top-ranked defense. And while he wouldn't go into specifics as to what he's looking for in an offensive coordinator or offensive scheme, the former college quarterback has an understanding of what it takes on both sides of the ball.

"I'm looking for somebody with character and capacity and that can lead our staff and be part of our vision for how to get the best out of our players."

Staley did say he would be making the defensive calls and hopes to have a staff in place "in a few weeks."

Chargers general manager Tom Telesco was asked why he hired a guy with so little NFL coaching experience, including zero on the offensive side.

"Having his background, coming up in high school and college on offense. I think that helps," Telesco said. "I'm watching the Baltimore and Buffalo playoff game and one coach [Sean McDermott] had a defensive background and the other [John Harbaugh] had a special-teams background. And they both have young quarterbacks and they're both doing very well."

"There are different ways to do this," said Telesco, adding that Staley's brain is "very sharp."

Chargers' new coach Staley looking to connect with Herbert

By Joe Reedy
Associated Press
January 21, 2021

COSTA MESA, Calif. — Brandon Staley's first phone call after he accepted the Los Angeles Chargers head coaching job Sunday was to his wife, Amy. His second was to franchise quarterback Justin Herbert.

On Thursday, right before he was formally introduced as the 17th head coach in franchise history, Staley and his family video chatted with Herbert.

"You have to earn the players' trust and there's not a bigger person whose trust we need to earn than Justin's," Staley said.

The 38-year old Staley becomes a head coach after one season as the Los Angeles Rams defensive coordinator and only four years as an NFL assistant. He also fills what was considered by many to be the most attractive of the seven head coaching openings this offseason. There is plenty of talent on both sides of the ball, including Herbert, who is favored to win AP Offensive Rookie of the Year honors.

Staley replaces Anthony Lynn, who was fired on Jan. 4, two years after the Chargers reached the AFC's divisional round. Los Angeles posted two straight losing years, including 7-9 this past season.

It is also not lost on Staley that his rapid rise from being a defensive coordinator at Division III John Carroll to leading an NFL franchise in five years is a surprise.

"It doesn't make sense to a lot of people. I know that, but every day that I was coaching at John Carroll, James Madison, Hutchinson Junior College, I was envisioning going against Tom Brady or Aaron Rodgers or Russell Wilson," he said. "I was studying the NFL and trying to become as good as I could be to compete in this league, because that was always a dream of mine, and I think that those experiences have uniquely shaped me."

General manager Tom Telesco said that even though Staley might be lighter compared to others in NFL experience, his strength in other areas more than made up for it. Even though Staley has coached defense for 15 years, including 11 in college, he did play quarterback at the University of Dayton.

Telesco also said the one quality that stands out about Staley is his maturity.

"There were no buzzwords, no platitudes. It was just very to the point. A lot of substance was answered, so that really stood out," Telesco said. "You would also like to have a high level teacher and communicator. You're seeing the communication part right now. You'll see the teacher part more and when we get on the grass."

Telesco added that Staley's staff might include an assistant with head coaching experience to help in the transition.

When it comes to Staley's on-field vision, he is looking to create an offense that plays to Herbert's strengths. Herbert set a rookie record with 31 touchdown passes in 15 starts as well as having eight 300-yard games,

"We don't want to impose a system on him, but create one for him that uniquely shapes to his skill set because he is unlike anybody in the NFL, you know he's his own person," Staley said. "I think that my background as a player, my background as a defensive coach, I think that we'll be able to shape that in a really special way. I was so excited to convey in the interview, and the specifics of that were a real highlight for me."

Staley is also hoping to apply the same agility and flexibility to his defense. He said he will continue to call the defense despite being the head coach.

"I think that's what I wanted to express in the interview is that we want to put people in conflict," he said. "We want to use multiple groupings to take advantage of our players. We want to play with different tempos to put teams in a real bind. People talk about complimentary football, you know, that's how you do it is you have offense, defense, and the kicking game as mirror images of one another."

Staley is the third assistant under Rams coach Sean McVay to get an NFL head coaching job, joining Green Bay's Matt LaFleur and Cincinnati's Zac Taylor.

He was one of six candidates to interview. The Chargers also interviewed offensive coordinators Brian Daboll (Buffalo), Eric Bieniemy (Kansas City), Jason Garrett (New York Giants) and Joe Brady (Carolina), as well as Indianapolis defensive coordinator Matt Eberflus.

Telesco and Staley are hoping to fill the coaching staff within the next couple weeks. Staley was hoping to interview Rams offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach Kevin O'Connell, but the request was blocked because it is considered a lateral move. Pep Hamilton was the Chargers quarterbacks coach this past season and has been in the running for offensive coordinator openings throughout the league.

Brandon Staley, Chargers coach? Those who know him know why he 'skyrocketed' to top

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
January 18, 2021

To understand how quickly Brandon Staley reached the status of Chargers coach, consider this:

The team has been in Los Angeles longer than he has been in the NFL.

Staley joins the Chargers after only four years in the league and one season as a coordinator. He coached outside linebackers in Chicago and Denver before overseeing the Rams' No. 1-ranked defense this season under Sean McVay.

"I knew that he could be a D-coordinator," said cornerback Chris Harris Jr., who played in Denver until joining the Chargers this season. "I knew that he should be a D-coordinator. But just to see how fast he's skyrocketed, I mean, that's pretty amazing."

Harris spent nine years with the Broncos, including 2019 when Staley was on Denver's staff. He praised Staley's football knowledge, willingness to listen to players and ability to build relationships. He predicted that teammates will love their new coach and called the situation "a great fit."

"I'm so happy, so excited for him," Harris said. "He's a guy who's very smart, knows the game of football. He took it to another level this year with the Rams. I'm excited to see what he can do with us."

Harris said he and Staley already have spoken, their discussion even going into detail about expected defensive scheme changes. With the Rams, Staley ran a 3-4 as opposed to the 4-3 the Chargers have been employing.

This is the first head coaching job at any level for Staley, 38, who spent 11 years as a college assistant before going to work for the Chicago Bears in February 2017. Six weeks earlier, the Chargers had relocated from San Diego.

During his first season as coach of the Rams, McVay was seven years younger than Staley is today. But by that point, McVay had been in the NFL as an assistant for eight years.

The man who gave Staley his first coaching job said he knew "from the word go" that Staley would be a success. But Joe Novak said no one on that 2006 Northern Illinois staff could have envisioned Staley becoming an NFL coach just 15 years later.

Even less likely, Staley's stops en route to the Chargers were rooted in anything but Power Five football conferences. Among other places, he worked at a Division III school in Minnesota and a community college in Kansas.

Staley established himself as a defensive coordinator with one season at James Madison, a Football Championship Subdivision school, and three at John Carroll, another Division III university.

"I knew he could be good," said Novak, who is retired. "I thought he had all the traits you're looking for. But to go from John Carroll to the Chargers in five years is pretty darn hard to do. I don't think you'll find anybody else who did that."

John Carroll is the school where Chargers general manager Tom Telesco played in the 1990s. Telesco and the Chargers selected Staley from a group of candidates with much more NFL experience, mostly as coordinators. The team also interviewed Jason Garrett, who spent 9½ years as Dallas' coach.

In the end, the Chargers opted for the choice they must believe has more of an NFL future than an NFL past.

The move to hire Staley on Sunday night was met with surprise around the league, in part because Buffalo offensive coordinator Brian Daboll was believed to be a favorite for the position, but also given Staley's relative inexperience. He was a candidate for the openings that remain in Philadelphia and Houston but instead landed a job considered to be one of the most attractive of this hiring cycle.

Staley spent his first three seasons in coaching as a graduate assistant working with the Northern Illinois defense. As a player, he was a quarterback, first at Dayton and then at Division II Mercyhurst University in Pennsylvania.

That combination of knowledge on both sides of the ball is expected to be vital for Staley as he moves into the unfamiliar position of overseeing an entire team.

"He's going to be so easy to work with," Novak said. "The players will love him. And he can coach too. That's a nice combination. He knew back at NIU where he was headed. You don't always find that in people that age."

With the Rams, Staley was armed with All-Pros in lineman Aaron Donald and cornerback Jalen Ramsey. His defense finished first in the NFL in points and yards allowed.

Harris explained that the more impressive thing Staley did this season could be seen in the performances of the other Rams, those defenders who emerged unexpectedly.

"They have a lot of talent over there," Harris said. "You know what you're going to get out of Ramsey and Donald. But you have a lot of no-name players, guys that you've never even heard of, who made a lot of plays on that team too."

Staley is scheduled to meet with the media Thursday for the first time since accepting the job. Along with reaching out to his new players, he is assembling his staff, one that could include current offensive coordinator Shane Steichen, though no announcement has been made.

Multiple reports Monday indicated Staley would be hiring Las Vegas' Frank Smith to be his run game coordinator. Smith has been the tight ends coach for the Raiders the last three years.

Novak said Staley's lack of ego will allow him to bring in assistants who can best supplement his skill-set. He said Staley's personality and energy will be infectious and effective.

"You spend a half-hour with him and you'll know what I'm talking about," Novak said. "You just know. With that kid — he's still a kid to me — you just know. He's got all the qualities."

Chargers head coach Brandon Staley is still in his heart a Perry Pirate

By Jeff Shudel
The News-Herald (Willoughby, Ohio)
June 16, 2021

Get out the welcome banners; Brandon Staley is headed home for the first time in two years.

Staley's feet and head are in California as the first-year head coach of the Los Angeles Chargers. His heart is where it has always been — Perry, Ohio.

Staley, a graduate of Perry High School and the University of Dayton, exudes enthusiasm when he is in front of his players and when he is in front of the media, as he was on Zoom June 16 when the Chargers wrapped up their mandatory minicamp.

Most of the questions directed to Staley were from beat writers covering the Chargers, but the 38-year-old former John Carroll defensive coordinator also took time to talk about his roots and the influence the late Bob Ritley had on him as the Perry head coach. Staley played quarterback for the Pirates.

"Coach Ritley was a special, special man," Staley said. "I don't think I ever met a player, a teacher, a coach or someone that had contact with him that didn't revere him."

"When you were in the presence of him you felt different. You felt special. He had that special way about him. He got the essence of football. He got the essence of teaching. I think that's why we all loved playing for him so much. He had the same staff for over 20 years."

The more Staley talked about the Perry days, the more excited he became.

"All of us that were fortunate enough to go to school there, we all played for the same coaches. We had a lot of stability, a lot of continuity growing up."

"Certainly, I was able to see what a head coach should look like — a leader. A person that not only was a great football coach, but the type of leader and connector within the community. He could have a conversation with anybody and you would feel better about yourself."

"Certainly, I miss him. I've been able to keep in contact with his wife and son Tim, who was a heck of a player growing up. He played at the University of Akron."

"There's nothing like home. That place means a lot to me. I'm actually going back there for the first time in two years in a couple days. Coach Ritley meant an awful lot to me."

Staley has not stayed in one place long since his coaching career began in 2006 as a graduate assistant at Northern Illinois. He made stops at St. Thomas in 2009 (defensive line coach/special teams coach), Hutchinson in 2010-11 (associate head coach/defensive coordinator), Tennessee in 2012 (graduate assistant) John Carroll in 2013 (defensive coordinator/secondary coach), James Madison in 2014 (defensive coordinator/linebackers coach) and then back to John Carroll in 2015-16 as defensive coordinator/secondary coach to end his college coaching gigs.

Staley coached the Bears outside linebackers in 2017-18 and the Broncos outside linebackers in 2019.

It was impossible for Chargers general manager Tom Telesco (a John Carroll graduate) to not take notice, considering in 2020 Staley was defensive coordinator of the Los Angeles Rams, who finished with the top-rated defense last season.

“He’s a genius,” Rams cornerback Jaleel Ramsey told Sports Illustrated when the Chargers hired Staley. “He’s smart. He knows how to use his players, and works well to put his players in position to make plays or have impact on the game.

“He knows how to get the best out of people. He knows how to calm people down and keep us going throughout the games. I just think he’s great. There’s literally nothing negative I can say about him. I think he would be an amazing head coach.”

The second stint with John Carroll was the launching point for the success that followed, Staley said on the Zoom call. The 2016 team beat Baldwin-Wallace, 17-10, in a defensive struggle in the second game of the season. The Blue Streaks went on to beat powerhouse Mount Union and then won three games in the Division III playoffs before bowing out in a national semifinal at Wisconsin-Oshkosh, 10-3.

“Anybody that knows me knows John Carroll is the place that really shaped me,” Staley said. “I think that’s where I discovered myself as a leader and a coach. I kind of hit a sweet spot there.

“The people at John Carroll — that place — the players, the coaches, the administration, the professors — that campus community meant a lot to my wife and me. Those players are a big reason why I’m here today. There are too many to name, but that experience with (then John Carroll head coach) Tom Arth was one of those really impactful experiences for me. That’s where I really found my rhythm as a coach.

“That team we had in 2016 was the best team in school history. It’s one of the best defenses I’ve ever been a part of. That whole process started in 2013. The 2016 team was the end of the run we had. It’s such an example of what you can do when you have special people in place.”

If all goes well with the Chargers, Staley’s nomadic life as a football coach is at an end.

JOE LOMBARDI

Chargers offensive coordinator Joe Lombardi believes the wait was worth it

By Gilbert Manzano
Orange County Register
August 7, 2021

COSTA MESA — Chargers offensive coordinator Joe Lombardi has noticed the close friendship between quarterbacks Justin Herbert and Chase Daniel and compared them to the 1988 comedy film “Twins.”

Herbert and Daniel are an odd pairing visually because Herbert is six inches taller, but they complement each other as quarterbacks, according to Lombardi.

It’s a perfect pairing between an emerging starting quarterback and a vastly experienced backup.

“You know, it’s really like having another coach in the room,” Lombardi said about Daniel, a 13-year veteran. “It kind of looks like Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito in ‘Twins’ when they’re standing next to each other, but it’s great having them.”

The quarterbacks are one of many reasons why Lombardi decided to join the Chargers this year as the offensive coordinator.

Lombardi waited five years before returning as a play caller because he wanted the perfect situation to redeem himself after a short stint as the Detroit Lions’ offensive coordinator in 2014 and 2015.

With a star quarterback in Herbert, a revamped offensive line with an All-Pro center in Corey Linsley and an abundance of playmakers with wide receiver Keenan Allen and running back Austin Ekeler, the Chargers qualified as a perfect situation for Lombardi from a personnel standpoint, but it was his close relationship with Chargers coach Brandon Staley that got him to leave New Orleans after five years as their quarterbacks coach.

Lombardi coached Staley in college when Staley was the quarterback for Mercyhurst University in 2005.

“I really enjoyed my time in New Orleans and was happy there, but you know, my history with Brandon and this organization, I was real excited for the opportunity,” Lombardi said. “I’ve got a lot of experience with (Chargers offensive line coach) Frank Smith from our time in New Orleans. So it’s been very seamless, and it’s a good group.”

Lombardi was familiar with the Chargers’ roster after the Saints’ scrimmages against the Chargers in Costa Mesa between 2017 to 2019. He got a close look at Allen, who’s regarded as one of the best route runners in the NFL.

“As advertised,” Lombardi said about working with Allen. “There’s not better. He’s just always open, just one of those guys. Even when you look at the script and you look at the defense versus the route, and you think, ‘Oh, they’ll probably have him covered,’ but they don’t necessarily. He’s just a fun guy to be around. He’s always positive and has good energy. It’s been great.”

Allen compared Lombardi’s offense to what former Chargers offensive coordinator Ken Whisenhunt ran with quarterback Philip Rivers. He said it’s an elevated version of the West Coast offense, one that will allow him to play more freely.

“Just a step up where I’m allowed to play free and play my game,” Allen said. “The fact that I was in that offense and with Phil for so long, I’m able to translate it into this offense.”

Lombardi said his new offensive system will be a blend from what he ran with the Saints for many years, but with heavy input from Staley, Smith and quarterbacks coach Shane Day.

Lombardi said it didn’t work in Detroit with quarterback Matthew Stafford and wide receiver Calvin Johnson because he was focused on replicating Sean Payton’s system with the Saints.

With another opportunity to call plays, Lombardi is allowing his perfect situation to have plenty of say in building the Chargers’ offense.

New Chargers coordinator Joe Lombardi looks to build offense around Justin Herbert

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
January 26, 2021

His first shot as an NFL offensive coordinator lasted 23 games.

Joe Lombardi now has a second chance and plans to apply a lesson learned in 2014-15.

"Just having the flexibility to adjust a little bit better maybe than we did back then," he said Tuesday in a videoconference. "That's the biggest thing, just the flexibility to adjust as things aren't like you're used to them being."

Lombardi, 49, was hired this week by new coach Brandon Staley to oversee a Chargers offense that features one of the NFL's bright young quarterbacks in Justin Herbert.

Seven years ago, he joined Jim Caldwell's staff in Detroit for a tenure that turned out to be rocky and failed to meet expectations. Lombardi was fired seven games into the 2015 season.

He had spent the previous seven years with New Orleans, first as an offensive assistant and then as quarterbacks coach. Lombardi suggested Tuesday that he had become too rutted in the Saints' way of operating.

His two Lions teams had a difficult time running the ball and in pass protection, which led to Matthew Stafford struggling despite the presence of receivers Calvin Johnson and Golden Tate.

After being dismissed by Caldwell, Lombardi returned to New Orleans, where he spent five more seasons as quarterbacks coach before the Chargers called.

Now, he's in a position where, like Staley last week, he's touting the idea of building a scheme around Herbert rather than forcing the quarterback into a predetermined system.

"I'm comfortable with whatever our guys are good at," Lombardi said. "Man, if it's something the quarterback thrives in, then that's what we're going to want to do."

For Herbert, Lombardi explained that could mean more up-tempo and no-huddle next season. The Chargers tried both this season but with no sustained commitment.

In college, Herbert flourished in an offense that never huddled and operated almost exclusively from the shotgun. Lombardi said he will go back to Herbert's days at Oregon to tap into what the 22-year-old does best.

"He's got a skill set that is elite," Lombardi said. "It appears there's nothing he can't do. He's got an incredibly strong arm, good accuracy. He's very athletic. Sounds like he's a real smart guy that's a good leader."

Along with directing the Chargers' offense, Lombardi is expected to continue developing Herbert after a season that made him the favorite for the NFL's offensive rookie of the year award.

Having spent 12 of the previous 14 years working with Drew Brees, Lombardi said the future Hall of Famer's commitment to detail and exhaustive preparation are two qualities he can pass along to Herbert.

He said that in New Orleans, Brees' influence could be seen in the Saints' other quarterbacks, specifically how they followed his example. He called Brees' traits "coachable."

Lombardi's familiarity with Herbert dates to preparation for last year's draft. He said he began paying closer attention during the season as Herbert gained league-wide exposure by the week.

The Chargers lost to Saints in mid-October, 30-27, in overtime. Herbert finished 20 for 34 for 264 yards and four touchdowns, an effort Lombardi noticed even as he was more focused on Brees.

"I've seen enough to know I've got no questions about his abilities," Lombardi said. "If you lined up all the quarterback skill sets in the NFL, he'd be at the very top with a couple guys."

After a season in which the Chargers offense on occasion lacked aggressiveness, Lombardi said that although game situations sometimes dictate otherwise, he leans toward leaving the offense on the field if there's an opportunity.

"I always say, 'What would I want if I'm on the other sidelines?' " Lombardi said. "I always feel like when a team's going for it on fourth down [it's] like, 'I wish they were just punting it.' So, yeah, I'm a big fan of going for it on fourth down."

Lombardi said he was drawn to the Chargers' job mostly because of his relationship with Staley. In 2005, both were at Mercyhurst University, Lombardi as offensive coordinator and Staley as quarterback.

He also said he is not surprised Staley received a head coaching job after only four seasons in the NFL. Lombardi recalled a conversation the two had a few years ago about Staley making it to the league as a coach.

"I said, 'Look, you'll get your chance, and I bet you you'll be a head coach in five years,' " Lombardi said, smiling. "Pretty sure I called that one a long time ago."

Chargers' Joe Lombardi eager to build an offense around Justin Herbert

By Gilbert Manzano
Orange County Register
January 26, 2021

Brandon Staley observed from the back of the room while Joe Lombardi instructed the New Orleans Saints' quarterbacks, including Drew Brees.

Nearly 12 years before Staley asked Lombardi to be his offensive coordinator with the Chargers, Lombardi invited his former quarterback turned coach to a training camp visit as the Saints embarked on their Super Bowl season of 2009.

"I'd bet you that he's watched every single game we've played on offense here in New Orleans since then," Lombardi said Tuesday about Staley, who at the time coached defensive linemen and special teams at St. Thomas, a Division III program in Minnesota. "Just (Staley's) familiarity with me and what we've done here (in New Orleans), it makes it such an easier transition."

If Lombardi's guess about the recently-hired Chargers head coach is true, then Staley has watched more than 160 Saints games from the past decade.

On Monday, Staley hired Lombardi as the Chargers' new offensive coordinator. Lombardi spent 12 seasons on Sean Payton's coaching staff during two stints in New Orleans — 10 overall as the quarterbacks coach, including the past five seasons.

Lombardi, 49, said he had interest in other coaching jobs since the Detroit Lions fired him as the offensive coordinator in 2015, but he wasn't going to jump at any opportunity. It needed to make sense and familiarity was important to him.

Staley, 38, was Lombardi's quarterback for one season at Mercyhurst University in 2005, when Lombardi was the offensive coordinator.

"Brandon, No. 1," Lombardi said when asked why the Chargers' opening was the right fit. "How well I know him and I think how well he knows me. ... Not to mean that we're going to copy (the Saints' offense), but just coming from a common background of football, to be able to get things started. As he is in the beginning of putting a staff together, what he is looking for, it all lines up with the way that I think.

"Sean Payton often says that he is more interested in compatibility first before he thinks about capability. I just think that the compatibility of what Brandon is building here is going to be second-to-none."

Lombardi will likely incorporate some parts of the Saints' offense to form the right scheme for quarterback Justin Herbert and the rest of the Chargers' offense, but he knows the importance of flexibility.

Lombardi said a reason why his stint with the Lions didn't work out was because he forced the Saints' offensive system instead of using it as a starting point to build off players' strengths. The Lions finished 11-5 during Lombardi's first season in 2014, but the offense based on short passes, timing and precision produced mixed results for quarterback Matthew Stafford and a Lions team that ranked 19th in total offense. It got worse the following season and the Lions fired Lombardi after a 1-6 start.

"The biggest thing is just being able to be more flexible," Lombardi said about what he learned the most as a first-time play caller in Detroit. "Spending so much time in New Orleans and doing things one way, you kind of get used to that. When you're put into a new situation where the schedule is different, and maybe you're around coaches that weren't used to doing things the way that you were used to, just having flexibility to adjust a little bit better maybe than we did back then.

"That's the biggest thing, just the flexibility to adjust when things aren't the way that you're used to them being."

Staley has only coached in the NFL for four seasons, but he's had plenty of success by prioritizing players' strengths over schemes. Lombardi said he is eager to form an offensive coaching staff with Staley.

Lombardi wants coaches from other offensive schemes to provide different perspectives, which will be vital for Herbert's development after a dynamic rookie season.

"He's got a skill set that's elite," Lombardi said about Herbert. "It appears there's nothing that he can't do. He's got an incredibly strong arm, good accuracy and he's very athletic. Sounds like he's a real smart guy that's a good leader. He just checks all the boxes."

Lombardi said it's too soon to reveal what the Chargers' offense will look like in 2021, but he said Staley wants tempo.

With Herbert's downfield accuracy, and Staley looking to play off his quarterbacks' strengths, Lombardi will likely call many deep shots, but he understands what type of weapons Herbert has.

Wide receiver Keenan Allen, running back Austin Ekeler and tight end Hunter Henry thrive with up-tempo passes, a staple of the Saints' offense since Payton took over in 2006. The Chargers' trio had a similar style with quarterback Philip Rivers before Herbert took over in 2020.

Allen had an instant connection with Herbert, but Henry and Ekeler, one of the best pass-catching running backs in the NFL, often got lost when the rookie quarterback was looking upfield for wide receivers Mike Williams, Jalen Guyton and Tyron Johnson.

It will be up to Lombardi and Staley to find the right balance to utilize all of the Chargers' skill players.

Lombardi has shown he's able to evolve around his Saints quarterbacks in recent years. He's worked with quick passers Brees and Teddy Bridgewater, aggressive quarterback Jameis Winston and athletic quarterback Taysom Hill. Watching how Payton changed the Saints' offense from Brees as the focal point to wide receiver Michael Thomas and running back Alvin Kamara as the centerpieces, will likely help Lombardi in his second opportunity as an offensive coordinator.

Lombardi said it's important to have a balanced offense, which scared some Chargers fans on social media, but he reiterated the importance of using Herbert's strengths as a passer.

"I think it's important to have some balance," Lombardi said. "But when you have a quarterback as talented as Justin, you want to let him throw the ball when it's appropriate. That's for sure."

Herbert had a historic rookie season under prior head coach Anthony Lynn, but the coaching staff was often criticized for conservative play calling and not taking enough chances on fourth down. Lombardi wasn't as cautious in his response when asked about possibly going for it more on fourth downs.

"I'm a big fan of going for it on fourth down," Lombardi said. "I know all the data analysis says that we are probably not aggressive enough as NFL coaches. I'm in favor of moving in that direction."

Chargers' Lombardi hoping to make most of second chance

*By Joe Reedy
Associated Press
January 26, 2021*

COSTA MESA, Calif. (AP) — Joe Lombardi is hoping that his second stint as an offensive coordinator goes better than the first.

Lombardi, who accepted the Los Angeles Chargers coordinator opening over the weekend, said on Tuesday the biggest thing he learned from his first opportunity in Detroit was that he needs to be more flexible when assessing his personnel and their abilities. Lombardi went to the Lions in 2015, but was fired seven games into the following season.

"Spending so much time in New Orleans and doing things one way, you kind of get used to that," he said. "When you're put into a new situation where the schedule is different, and maybe you're around coaches that weren't used to doing things the way that you were used to, just having to flexibility to adjust a little bit better, maybe, than we did back then."

Lombardi comes to Los Angeles after a second stint in New Orleans, where he was the quarterbacks coach for five seasons. Twelve of his 14 seasons as an NFL assistant have been with the Saints.

Chargers head coach Brandon Staley and Lombardi have worked together before, but in a player-coach capacity. Lombardi was the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach at Mercyhurst College in 2005, when Staley transferred from Dayton to play with his twin brother, Jason.

Staley, who was hired as coach on Jan. 17, said Lombardi's experience with the Saints should prove invaluable.

"You think about the relationship he has with Drew Brees and having a front-row seat to that relationship. It's huge," Staley said. "And then obviously partnering up with Sean Payton — one of the best offensive coaches in the NFL, really one of the best coaches period — that experience is invaluable."

Lombardi said the biggest thing he gained from Brees is being exact on details and that other things, such as how to communicate with the receivers, is coachable.

The first task for Lombardi will be trying to create a system that further showcases quarterback Justin Herbert, who passed for 4,336 yards and a rookie-record 31 touchdowns this past season.

Lombardi said he hasn't spoken to Herbert yet, but that he has reached out to him after finally getting his number. Lombardi scouted Herbert leading up to last year's draft and had a chance to see him in person when the Chargers faced the Saints.

"I've seen enough to know that I have no questions about his abilities," said Lombardi about Herbert. "I mean, if you lined up all the quarterback skillsets in the NFL, he'd be at the very top, with couple of guys. Like I said, the sky's the limit with what he's able to do."

In discussions with Staley, Lombardi said they are looking to have an up-tempo offense. The Chargers were ranked ninth in the league in total offense, including sixth in passing. While they have a solid array of skill position players — including running back Austin Ekeler along with wide receivers Keenan Allen and Mike Williams — the Chargers have struggled to build an offensive line and have lacked depth because of key injuries.

"Look, I'm comfortable with whatever our guys are good at. If it's something that the quarterback thrives in, that's what we're going to want to do," Lombardi said.

RENALDO HILL

Chargers' new defense leader Renaldo Hill is well- coordinated with Brandon Staley

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
January 27, 2021

They spent the 2019 season together in Denver, as in really together.

Renaldo Hill explained that his office was next to Brandon Staley's, and the two frequently swapped ideas.

"I think we probably spent more time in the other person's office just talking and game-planning than our own," Hill said Wednesday. "It was important to us."

They now are teaming up again, Staley as the Chargers' new head coach and Hill as his defensive coordinator.

Barely a year ago, they were position coaches for the Broncos. Staley worked with the outside linebackers and Hill the defensive backs. Neither has been in the NFL long, Staley only four seasons and Hill three.

But in 2021, they will combine efforts to oversee a defense led by Joey Bosa up front and Derwin James everywhere else.

Staley, who was hired away from the Rams after one year as their defensive coordinator, will call defensive plays during games while Hill manages the operation.

"We'll collaborate," Hill said. "[Staley has] always been open to listening and receiving. I'm looking forward to the opportunity. But, in the meantime, I definitely will lean on Staley and be able to sit back and learn."

The setup is similar to what they experienced in Denver, where head coach Vic Fangio has called the defense the last two years with Ed Donatell serving as coordinator.

The Chargers will be switching to a hybrid 3-4 scheme that is expected to present various fronts, often employs more defensive backs and emphasizes versatility.

"We want to uniquely shape it around our guys," Staley explained last week. "I think that's probably the hallmark of the way we play, that agility that we have to feature our premium players."

Under former coordinator Gus Bradley, the Chargers blitzed as little as any team. Though they are expected to bring extra pressure more in 2021, the Chargers don't figure to be blitz heavy.

Staley and the Rams ranked 19th in blitz percentage this season. Using a similar 3-4 system under Fangio, Denver finished in the bottom half of the NFL in blitzing in 2019-20.

Hill, 42, was drafted in the seventh round by Arizona in 2001 and had a decade-long career. His playing days ended when the Broncos cut him in late July 2011. During that summer, he met Chris Harris, an undrafted rookie cornerback the Broncos had signed out of Kansas. Harris was with Denver for nine years and now is entering his second season with the Chargers.

"I heard about some of the noise, that this young guy was flashing, making plays all over the field," Hill recalled, smiling. "And, you know, 10 years down the road he's still doing the same thing."

Hill's coaching tenure began in 2012 as a graduate assistant at Wyoming. Two years later, he was out of coaching and spent time visiting various college programs. He said he went to his alma mater, Michigan State, as well as Alabama, Utah and North Dakota State.

"I just wanted to continue to build while I was out of the game," Hill said. "I was always trying to find out how I could advance and move forward."

He got a job coaching defensive backs at the University of Pittsburgh in 2015 and spent three years there before reaching the NFL as an assistant with Miami. Hill was with the Broncos the last two seasons.

Now, he's a coordinator entering just his fourth year in the league and with a team that is transitioning to a new staff but has enough promise to be considered beyond rebuilding.

"It may have been a fast move up, but I felt like I was preparing myself," Hill said. "You have to say there was some luck there. But I'm thankful for every opportunity I've been in."

Though the Chargers have announced nothing officially, Hill indicated that Giff Smith, who has coached the team's defensive line the last five years, will remain on staff.

He also said Derrick Ansley and Tom Donatell will be joining the Chargers. Ansley had been the defensive coordinator at the University of Tennessee and Donatell, an ex-UCLA assistant, a quality control coach for Seattle.

The Chargers also have hired defensive line coach Jay Rodgers and Joe Barry, who is expected to be the defensive run game coordinator.

New Chargers DC Renaldo Hill excited to reunite with Brandon Staley

By Gilbert Manzano
Orange County Register
January 27, 2021

Brandon Staley and Renaldo Hill spent countless hours in each other's offices as defensive coaches on the Denver Broncos' staff to not only prepare for their 2019 opponents but for future offensive schemes they might face.

Planning ahead is why Staley, the recently hired Chargers head coach, decided to hire Hill as his defensive coordinator.

"Let's figure out some puzzles," Hill recalled Wednesday about his game-planning hours with Staley. "Let's find the new things that people are doing and let's attack them ... We're always looking for the next thing. How can we improve our defense?"

The two became close during their lone season together in Denver, with Staley as the outside linebackers coach and Hill as the defensive backs coach.

Hill remained in the same role with the Broncos this past season and Staley went on to be the Rams' defensive coordinator.

Now they'll reunite to use their past notes and brainstorm for the Chargers.

Staley will call the plays for the defense, but Hill said the new job intrigued him because he knows Staley will allow his heavy input on game days.

"I'm going to lean on (Staley) earlier in this process," said Hill, a first-time defensive coordinator.

"But I know he's always open to listen to ideas. And he has his own ideas, I have mine. But as a defensive staff, we'll definitely collaborate on all those and come up with the best for the guys, but he's always been open to listening and receiving. A lot of times you may be in rooms and it might not be received as well."

Hill, 42, played 10 NFL seasons as safety for the Arizona Cardinals, then-Oakland Raiders, Miami Dolphins and Broncos. He coached for college programs Wyoming and Pittsburgh before landing his first NFL coaching job with the Dolphins in 2018 as an assistant defensive backs coach.

Hill said Tampa Bay Buccaneers defensive coordinator Todd Bowles inspired him to become a coach when Bowles coached him with the Dolphins in 2008.

"The way his brain operated, that's something that I think we have a shared common," Hill said about Bowles.

"Always thinking from a different lens. He always talked to me about, 'You know this game. There will be a lot of people with a lot of experience.' It's good to pick up that experience from him and understand that they have something to offer, but don't sell yourself short on the things you know about this game as well."

Staley also noticed that potential in Hill, and referred to him as a "young superstar," according to Hill during the recruiting pitch.

Hill said this opportunity will help him learn how to coach defensive linemen and linebackers while still sharing his extensive knowledge to the Chargers' defensive backs.

Eventually, Hill wants to use this experience for bigger coaching roles and he believes Staley will allow him to grow as a coach with the Chargers.

“That’s one of the first things that Staley mentioned is about putting guys in better positions in order to move up and advance,” said Hill, a Black coach, when discussing the NFL’s lack of diversity among coaches. “It just wasn’t lip service.

“(Staley is) always talking with his staff about putting guys in position to move up, and I know that’s something, once I step in that building, that’d be the game plan for not only myself but the rest of the staff.”

Hill didn’t get into specifics about how the Chargers will look defensively in 2021, but he stressed the importance of bringing pressure and disguising coverages, possibly from a Cover-2 scheme with two safeties downfield.

The Chargers rarely blitzed in the past four seasons with Gus Bradley as defensive coordinator. Bradley often utilized a four-man rush and used Cover-3 with a single-high safety.

“You have to bring those simulated pressures,” Hill said. “You have to bring those five-man pressures as well as six. Obviously, you want to be able to mix those things in, but you also want to see how your personnel fits to all those things.

“But I think it’s important to understand the personnel and how we want to operate, but I believe you have to bring pressure in this league. I believe you have to change it up and give these quarterbacks multiple looks. You also have to know who you’re going against, because of the quarterbacks we have in our conference, they invite pressure.”

Hill was likely referring to Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes.

He’s looking forward to game planning against him twice a year, along with the many other talented quarterbacks in the NFL.

Chargers’ Hill eager for first shot as defensive coordinator

*By Joe Reedy
Associated Press
January 27, 2021*

COSTA MESA, Calif. (AP) — Renaldo Hill is getting his first opportunity to be a defensive coordinator, although he won’t be thrown into the deep end of the pool just yet.

Los Angeles Chargers coach Brandon Staley will call the plays during games, allowing Hill to be able to progress at his own pace. It is a hierarchy Hill is used to. During his two seasons coaching defensive backs with the Denver Broncos, coach Vic Fangio called the plays while coordinator Ed Donatell handled things during the week.

“I definitely will lean on Staley, and be able to sit back and learn. It still gives you that that growth opportunity,” Hill said Wednesday. “I can move around and assert myself into the front seven, but also still have a footprint on the back end.”

The 42-year-old Hill has eight years of coaching experience after a 10-year playing career with the Cardinals, Raiders, Dolphins and Broncos.

He joined the Dolphins staff as assistant defensive backs coach in 2018 after five years at Wyoming and Pittsburgh, before being hired by the Broncos.

Hill and Staley worked together in Denver in 2019, when Staley was coaching outside linebackers.

“We’ll definitely collaborate on those and come up with what’s best for the guys, but he’s always been open to listening and receiving ideas,” Hill said. “Staley emphasizes all the time it is a collaboration of voices in the room, and everybody having their opinion in what this defense will look like. When you can listen to those other ideas, it makes everybody feel a part of what we’re doing, we’re having success.”

Hill inherits a unit that has defensive end Joey Bosa and safety Derwin James as its cornerstones, but plenty of questions. Bosa missed four games last season due to concussions and James has played in only five games the past two seasons due to foot and knee injuries.

After four years of running a 4-3 scheme under Gus Bradley, the Chargers will go back to a 3-4 defense. Los Angeles was ranked 10th in total defense this past season, but had six games in which it squandered double-digit leads. The Chargers were also 25th in sacks and tied for 22nd in takeaways.

Hill said he is looking for the defense to have a more consistent pass rush and to better pressure the quarterback. The Chargers were last in blitzing, averaging 6.1 per game while the league average is 11.7.

Hill also revealed that defensive line coach Giff Smith is being retained, while Derrick Ansley, Joe Barry and Tom Donatell are joining the staff.

KEENAN ALLEN

Justin Herbert and Keenan Allen: The NFL's next great QB-WR duo?

By Daniel Popper
The Athletic
September 8, 2021

Justin Herbert walked to the line of scrimmage late in the first quarter in an empty SoFi Stadium in December and set up under center Dan Feeney. The Chargers, then 3-9, were taking on the Falcons in a Week 14 matchup. The game was scoreless and Herbert and the offense faced a second-and-goal from the 10-yard line. As Herbert settled behind Feeney, he looked to his right at Keenan Allen, who was positioned on the hash marks split off the outside shoulder of tight end Hunter Henry.

Herbert and Allen made eye contact for a split second. Just a slight hesitation. Then Herbert sent Austin Ekeler, who was lined up offset right behind Allen, in motion to the left side of the formation.

Watching live, this eye contact seemed benign, even meaningless. But in that second, the thoughts rolling through Herbert's mind shine a light on his burgeoning relationship with one of the NFL's best receivers.

You see, Herbert was supposed to audible. The initial play call was a pass. Allen was the primary read on an out route. But, based on how the play unfolded in practice, Herbert was told he should kill the play to a run if the cornerback was playing outside leverage on Allen, defending against the very out route he was slated to run.

Herbert got to the line and saw Falcons rookie A.J. Terrell shaded to Allen's outside, with his back to the sideline. So he looked over at Allen, who gave him a subtle shake of the head.

"Herb, this is not it," Allen remembered thinking in that moment. "There's no chance. This is a first-round draft pick. I don't want this guy to pick me off. If he picks me off and goes 99 yards, it's your fault."

Allen stared into Herbert's soul like a mother catching her son reaching into the cookie jar.

"Herbert. Kill it."

Herbert got the message but did not listen. He looked away after Ekeler passed behind him and readied for the snap. As Herbert started his snap count, Allen raised his right hand up and turned his palm to the sky.

"What are you doing?"

"I remember looking at him and I was like, 'Nah, I'm gonna throw this one,'" Herbert recalled. "And so we did it."

"Fuck it," Allen said.

Herbert took the snap, dropped back and faked a handoff to Kalen Ballage. As he did, Falcons defensive end Steven Means beat Henry off the edge. With pressure bearing down, Herbert retreated in the pocket to give Allen time to break.

Allen still did not think he was getting the ball. Nothing about the coverage led him to believe he was even an option. The Falcons had made the perfect call, and Herbert had not adjusted.

"I ran the route, like, nonchalant," Allen said.

Herbert fired a laser off his back foot, fitting the throw into a tiny window past a diving Terrell. Allen had created just enough separation.

Touchdown Chargers.

"He throws a fucking dime," Allen said.

Allen pointed back at Herbert just before celebrating with a dance.

"It's just one of those plays where I trusted Keenan," Herbert said. "I just thought, 'Keenan is this special player, I'm going to see what I can do with him.'"

"We talked about it after the game," Herbert added. "He was like, 'I wanted you to kill that.' I was like, 'You're glad I didn't kill it, huh?'"

This play was both a culmination and a window into the future.

Herbert was Tyrod Taylor's backup throughout training camp. He didn't take first-team reps until his surprise first NFL start in Week 2 against the Chiefs after a mishap with Taylor's pregame rib injection. Herbert was forced to develop his rapport with Allen on the fly, mostly in games. Over 12 weeks, that turned into an unwavering trust — a trust so strong that Herbert felt comfortable ignoring what should have been a no-brainer check in that Falcons game.

Now Herbert — one of the most exciting talents in the game with a chance to cement himself as a truly elite quarterback as he enters his second pro season — is the unquestioned starter. He has spent an entire offseason cultivating his on-field connection with Allen.

Joe Montana and Jerry Rice. Steve Young and Rice. Troy Aikman and Michael Irvin. Peyton Manning and Marvin Harrison. More recently, Matthew Stafford and Calvin Johnson. Matt Ryan and Julio Jones. Drew Brees and Michael Thomas. They were all here once.

Could Herbert and Allen be the NFL's next great quarterback-receiver duo?

"Absolutely," Allen said. "We can't be stopped."

On the night of April 23, 2020, the Chargers drafted Justin Herbert with No. 6 pick. Days later, Herbert packed up his car and drove from Eugene, Ore., to Costa Mesa, Calif., to begin his NFL career.

With the pandemic still in its early stages, teams were not permitted to hold rookie minicamp or offseason workouts. The Chargers quarterbacks and skill players, instead, took to fields in Orange County to get in their work.

Taylor, the veteran entering his second season with the Chargers, was organizing and running the workouts. He threw to the first four receivers, including Allen. Then Easton Stick, a Chargers fifth-round pick in 2019, threw to the next two receivers. Herbert, the rookie, got the scraps. He grew up a Chargers fan, though, and had been watching Allen from afar for years.

"I was just kind of admiring everyone," Herbert, speaking in a 30-minute interview with The Athletic, remembers of those early-May workouts.

It was not until training camp that Herbert actually attempted a pass to Allen. All those throws came in routes-against-air or one-on-ones. Taylor was taking all the first-team reps as the team's declared starter. Herbert was working exclusively with the second and third teams.

Which only makes what happened next even more remarkable.

We all know the story by now. The Chargers hosted the Chiefs in their home opener in Week 2. Taylor had suffered a rib injury in the season opener at the Bengals while taking a hit. A pregame pain injection punctured his lung. Taylor went to the hospital, and Herbert found out minutes before kickoff that he was about to make his NFL debut.

The first pass attempt of Herbert's career, fittingly, went to Allen. He handed off to Ekeler twice. Then on a first-and-10, Allen motioned into the right slot and ran a wheel route down the right sideline. Allen stopped his route 15 yards downfield, working back toward Herbert. He was open.

And Herbert, well ...

"Just sailed it," Herbert said with a smile.

"Voof!" Allen said, waving his hand quickly over his head to mimic the high throw. "What the fuck was that?"

"I just thought he was excited," Allen added. "I didn't think that was a normal ball."

He paused.

"It's a normal ball."

Allen trotted back to his quarterback and tried to settle him down.

"I told him to relax," Allen said. "That shit was hot."

"He came back to the huddle and said, 'All right, you got that one out of your system. Let's dial it back,'" Herbert said.

Five plays later, Herbert capped his first touchdown drive with a 4-yard scramble.

His first completion to Allen came on the next drive on a bubble screen. Allen took that for 14 yards. On the following series, Herbert went to Allen again, this time on an out-breaking option route near the right sideline on third down. He threw high again. The Chargers punted.

"I was salty at that point," Allen recalled. "I was like, 'What the fuck is about to happen?'"

Herbert answered that question pretty definitively.

Behind a sound defensive plan and an unexpected performance from their surprise starting quarterback, the Chargers had built a 14-6 lead over the defending champion Chiefs. On his first possession of the second half, Herbert moved the Chargers close to midfield. He faced a third-and-10.

Herbert took the shotgun snap and was almost immediately pressured by Kansas City defensive end Taco Charlton, who beat Henry off the right edge. Allen was running a post out of the right slot.

“As soon as the ball was snapped, I knew it was Cover 2,” Allen said. “I knew I should be getting the ball.”

Herbert stood in the pocket and delivered down the middle of the field, releasing the pass just before Charlton hit him. He layered the ball in between two defenders. Allen made the catch for a 25-yard gain, hanging on despite a big hit from Chiefs cornerback L’Jarius Sneed, who had peeled off his man to try and make a play over the top. Allen did not see Sneed coming.

“He hit me and I was like, ‘Damn!’” Allen said. “He threw that shit in there.”

“If you look at the back angle of the camera ... you don’t even see the hole,” Herbert said. “That’s where faith and that’s where practice reps come into play.”

But here’s the thing: Herbert and Allen did not have any practice reps. Herbert did not attempt a pass to Allen in an 11-on-11 setting until this very game. Early on in training camp and even during the season, Herbert was still focused on some of the basics of playing the position in the NFL, like taking snaps from under center — something he did not do at Oregon — opening up the correct way on handoffs and properly executing play-action fakes.

Herbert remembers a play from practice not long after he took over as starter when he tried to send Allen in motion pre-snap. Only Allen was not supposed to be the motion man.

“He just shakes his head,” Herbert said, “and I flip it to the other way.”

That is what makes the relationship so fascinating. That is what makes the production, from their first game together, so hard to wrap your mind around. Herbert was a neophyte as a quarterback. And he was forced to build trust with Allen, initially, from merely watching him from the practice sideline.

And yet the on-field connection started like this, and only grew more solid over the rest of the season. Herbert and Allen connected 96 times for 955 yards and eight touchdowns. Of those 96 completions, 28 produced third-down conversions.

“He’s always open,” Herbert said.

“No, seriously,” Allen said. “I am always open.”

Allen has been through this process once before. At their height, Allen and former Chargers quarterback Philip Rivers made up one of the best quarterback-receiver tandems in the league. Over seven seasons together, Rivers and Allen totaled 520 completions for 6,364 yards and 33 touchdowns. Under Rivers’ tutelage, Allen developed from a talented but injury-prone prospect into arguably the game’s most lethal route runner and one of the most consistent receivers in the league.

“Phil taught me so well and taught me so much,” Allen said.

Rivers is retired now, coaching high school football in Alabama, and it feels as though Allen is entering a second chapter of his career.

Allen is on a Hall of Fame trajectory. He turned 29 in April. If he produces five more seasons at the pace he has set over the past four years, he will crack the top five all-time in receptions.

Allen has a chance to become the first player in NFL history to catch 500 passes from two different quarterbacks. He needs 404 more catches from Herbert to get there. He has averaged 101 catches over his past four seasons. You do the math.

Rice never did it. Tony Gonzalez never did it. Larry Fitzgerald is the only player in NFL history to catch 400 passes from two different quarterbacks — Kurt Warner and Carson Palmer.

This is all very much in the realm of possibility for Allen. That is partly because of who is now throwing him the ball and how much potential Herbert holds in his towering 6-foot-6 frame. But it’s also because of just how damn good and reliable Allen is. The league is only really now starting to give Allen his due credit.

“If he is not in the top five, I’d love to see the top five,” Herbert said, “because I think he’s as good as it gets.”

Allen does not catch 70-yard touchdowns on a weekly basis. His performance is more subtle, more artistic. The beauty of his game is not in the flashiness, but in the less discernible aspects — the releases, the breaks at the top of his routes, the deception of his effortless movements, his knowledge of coverages, his feel for positioning and his almost innate understanding of how to shatter defender’s leverage.

“I have the answers to the test,” Allen said.

“Keenan could play quarterback too,” Herbert said. “He knows defenses better than anyone else.”

This is why Allen is so effective on third down. He has the most third-down-conversion receptions of any receiver in the league since 2017 with 98. DeAndre Hopkins has the next most with 83. Allen led the league in this stat in 2020, with 28, in 15 games.

“If you didn’t have lines on the field, it wouldn’t matter,” Herbert said. “Keenan would still get to the right place.”

The best could still be ahead for Allen. Herbert’s skill set opens so many doors. Rivers thrived because of his brain and accuracy, and he might very well be on his way to the Hall of Fame. Herbert, though, simply provides two things Rivers did not: elite arm strength, and the ability to both escape the pocket and throw on the run.

“It’s night and day,” Allen said of playing with Rivers versus Herbert. “(With Rivers), you got a guy who is going to go through his progressions every time. ... You can line up with Philip Rivers and you can say, well, he’s not throwing the ball to this side of the field. He’s not coming over here, just based on the defense. Pre-snap read, Phil is going to that side. Like, it’s 100 percent. Justin Herbert? There’s no chance! There’s no fucking chance. He’s throwing where he wants to throw the ball. He doesn’t care.”

Allen said when the Chargers moved on from Rivers last offseason and elevated Taylor to starter, they started practicing scramble drills for the first time. This was a new facet to the offense that just did not exist previously. Herbert then took it to another level when he replaced Taylor.

“He’s bringing up a whole new game,” Allen said. “Phil couldn’t run. Phil could throw the dime, but what if I’m not open right now? Herbert can scramble and then I can re-get open.”

Herbert thrives in off-platform situations. He also has enough confidence in himself to, say, shrug off an audible call, defensive coverages be damned.

“It ain’t new, but it ain’t the same thing,” Allen said. “It’s Keenan without Phil.”

Or, alternatively, it’s Keenan with Justin.

During OTAs in early June, new Chargers offensive coordinator Joe Lombardi shared his vision for Allen in his passing scheme.

“We always say that there are rules guys and guidelines guys,” Lombardi said. “Here are the rules to the routes; some of you have to follow them exactly, but for some of you, they’re guidelines.”

Allen?

“He’s definitely a guidelines guy,” Lombardi said.

Lombardi spent more than a decade as the Saints quarterbacks coach working with Brees and under Sean Payton, and he has brought that passing system to Los Angeles. One of the hallmarks of the scheme is a heavy dose of option routes, which are perfectly tailored for Allen’s skill set because of his spatial awareness and feel for leverages.

Allen said this is allowing him to “play more freely,” and that is largely related to these option routes. As a “guidelines” player, Allen can put his own flavor on routes. In football parlance, this is called “pumping” a route.

For instance, Allen might have an option route where he can break in, break out, or sit in an open space. Based on the leverage of the defenders pre-snap or on tape, though, he might see an opening and want to take a higher angle up the field. He would fake like he is running a sharp out route before splitting the defenders on a deeper line.

“Sometimes, he’ll look to me and tell me he’s going to pump it,” Herbert said. “So he’ll do something crazy and I’m just like, ‘Yeah, that’s awesome. I’ll find you.’”

Allen’s freedom in the scheme will also affect how Herbert goes through his progressions. Lombardi has given Herbert leeway to stay on Allen longer than he would with other receivers.

“Sometimes you’re late to the rest of the progression,” Herbert said, “but you know that Keenan will find a way to get open.”

“Normally a mortal quarterback would say, ‘I’m not giving it to him, I’m going to my progression,’” Lombardi said. “But, he ends up getting open so often that sometimes, as a quarterback, you give him an extra count.”

It is a fine line.

Herbert recalls a play from training camp where he moved off Allen on a progression because Chris Harris Jr. had him covered. Herbert completed a crossing route to Jalen Guyton for a 20-yard gain. Watching the play back on tape, though, Herbert saw that Allen came open after he had already moved on from that read.

"Had I stuck on him," Herbert said, "it would have been a walk-in touchdown."

"You just got to be right," Allen added. "When he does do it, he has to be right. When he doesn't do it, he has to be right again. He has to know when and when not, but he'll get it with more repetition."

As Lombardi said, this is a "good problem to have."

"Keenan would have a good relationship with any quarterback," he added. "He's a guy that you trust so much. When in doubt, you find him and throw him the football."

"I want to play with him for as long as I can," Herbert said. "And for as long as I can play with Keenan, I'm going to do my best to get him the ball."

On July 8, Herbert held a charity golf tournament in Eugene to raise money for a youth sports non-profit. He invited a number of his Chargers teammates, including Allen.

Allen initially said via text he would "love to go." But when Herbert later texted Allen for his flight information so he could book the travel for his top receiver, he got no response.

"Keenan's probably busy," Herbert remembered thinking. "He's got something going on."

Two days before the event, Herbert's phone lit up with a text from Allen.

"You got my flight?"

"I was like, 'I got to get on this!'" Herbert said.

Herbert sent the flight to Allen, and Allen arrived the next day, joining Scott Quessenberry, Michael Badgley, Storm Norton, Gabe Nabers and others for the event.

It says something that Allen wanted to support Herbert, right?

"I think he just really likes golf," Herbert deadpanned.

Allen also really likes his quarterback.

JOEY BOSA

Joey Bosa enjoying learning and exploring Los Angeles Chargers' new defense

By Shelley Smith
ESPN.com
August 5, 2021

COSTA MESA, Calif. -- To see Joey Bosa move -- like, say, between the field and the (healthy) snack cart after practice -- you'd think he was more like a sloth. Slow, deliberate, slower. You'd never guess he was one of the best and fastest edge rushers in the NFL.

But put Bosa on the football field, specifically in this new defense the Los Angeles Chargers are running, and the 6-foot-5, 280-pound Bosa has cat-like reflexes, brutal off the ball and even more brutal when he makes contact, which is often -- even without pads.

That's not to say that Bosa is completely comfortable standing on the edge, rather than down with a hand in the dirt. He does both, depending on whether new coach Brandon Staley has the Chargers in a 3-4 defense or a 4-3. It's all designed to keep the opposing offense guessing and is completely unpredictable, which is how Staley likes it.

And the thought of Bosa being utilized in many different ways is a scary thought to opposing defenses.

"There's a lot going on," Bosa said. "A lot of moving pieces. Usually I'm coming in here and I'm solely focused on how I'm rushing each day, which is another dynamic. I get to judge myself on another level, and it's fun. But yeah, it's going to take some time."

But football smarts are not an issue for Bosa.

"I'm going to make a few mistakes here and there, but by the time camp is over, I'm sure it will be second nature," he said.

On one sequence, Bosa took on rookie offensive tackle Rashawn Slater, who has been praised by just about everyone in camp. Slater was a first-round draft pick for a reason, a player who got the best of defending rookie defensive player of the year Chase Young (then at Ohio State) during his junior year at Northwestern -- setting up a great Week 1 matchup between Slater and Young when the Chargers head to Washington.

But back to Bosa and his gait ... the quick, game-time one. He faced Slater, who slowed him initially and held up until the whistle blew to end the rep. But if the whistle had blown just a little bit later, who knows if the rook would have held up.

"I turn into a different guy when I get mad," Bosa has said many times.

Bosa isn't the only player who loves the new scheme.

"It's refreshing," said defensive lineman Justin Jones. "It allows a team the inability to adjust to what we're going. It keeps them on their toes, which means offensive linemen are on their toes. They're not going to know who's blitzing -- who's coming and who's not coming."

"It's going to be hard to figure us out (for the opponents). What we're doing, what we're bringing. We're never a standstill defense and that's going to make us really hard to beat."

That suits Bosa just fine, even if it means learning a new scheme and a new stance. But Bosa admits they're not easy to learn, which he's fine with.

"A good defense shouldn't be easy to learn in two days," Bosa said. "So it's a fun challenge. Obviously seeing it live is a lot different than sitting at home reviewing on my book. ... It's not as much the athletic part of it. It's just seeing the field, understanding the formation, seeing shifts. There's a lot of moving pieces. I think it's a dynamic defense."

It's a defense who involves fast and relentless hitting, which is how Bosa has played his entire career. Even last season, when he was battling a bunch of injuries, Bosa still recorded 7.5 sacks and 39 tackles.

"Joey Bosa, he'd be good doing anything," Staley said. "We're trying to get him into a new comfort zone -- there are some things we're asking him to do that he hasn't done before. I think that more than anything, what he does best he'll be able to do at a high level. Some of the other things that are brand new for him will help not only himself but his teammates and we've tried to map that out for him. He's been great."

"You need premium players to play the type of defense we hope to play."

Perhaps the safest way to slow Bosa down is to bring a dog around, which perhaps is why Bosa doesn't have one ("I can barely take care of myself," he has said).

But he loves them. He slowly crawled up on the field to hug the Chargers' rescue mascot "Bolt" saying, "Come play with me," and hugged him tight.

So the best way to stop Bosa? Dog hugs and a sports drink from the snack cart.

Chargers Edge Rusher Joey Bosa Put Mental Health Recovery Over Football in Offseason

By Fernando Ramirez,
Sports Illustrated (Maven)
September 9, 2021

When players line up for stretching and activation for the Los Angeles Chargers, it's done in unison at Jack Hammett Sports Complex or Hoag Performance Center.

But when all players are on the ground going through a stretch, a silent figure is in the back doing his own thing.

Joey Bosa is backpedaling, doing lunges, and working out at his own speed. He is always working on his craft and always tries to improve. He works with his trainer Todd Rice in Florida, and his workout partner is his brother -- San Francisco 49ers defensive end Nick Bosa.

He is out there in Florida from the moment the season ends until mandatory minicamp. Usually, they go through numerous pass-rushing techniques or work on getting stronger and faster.

However, this year was different.

Last season was challenging all around, with the pandemic and the offseason program being shortened. It was rough, but for Bosa, the whole season was strange.

"The impact of what I went through last year was real," said Bosa with a straight face.

He sustained numerous injuries to begin the season. By the New Orleans game in Week 5, Bosa dealt with a triceps, ankle, and knee injuries that prevented him from playing any other down but third. He got a sack in the 4th quarter against Drew Brees using a spin move that would make Dwight Freeney proud.

Fast forward to Week 9 in Denver when the Chargers had a 21-point lead over the Broncos late in the third. Bosa took a hit to the head and would miss the rest of the game with a concussion. Things would change from here.

Bosa only remembered showing up at the facility on the bus. Everything else was foggy. The next few days would get even worse with him locking himself up in his room and only coming out to get his COVID test at the facility.

He would miss two games. He returned feeling a little more upbeat. He had a dominating performance against the Buffalo Bills in week 11, sacking the opposing quarterback three times, collected nine tackles and six tackles for loss.

Three weeks later, it would happen again. He sustained a second concussion in Las Vegas against the Raiders. He wouldn't return for the last two games of the season.

"I undersold how much it affected me mentally with a concussion or what I had to deal with," explained Bosa. "It was really intense, and I kind of fell into a bit of a hole at the end of last year mentally."

One of the factors that helped him get out of his hole was that the fact that he had Nick living with him in L.A. The younger Bosa brother was rehabbing from a torn ACL he sustained in week two against the Jets.

Bosa decided to room with his brother again, like when they were kids. Growing up, they competed in anything and everything. They still kind of compete to this day.

"I think we have this intense competition against each other all the time," admitted Bosa. "That's kind of unspoken like, when somebody else does something, we're happy for him, but at the same time, we're like s***, and I want to do better."

During the back end of training camp this year, the 49ers were in town to have a joint practice with the Chargers. The younger Bosa is still coming back from his torn ACL, but he was able to practice on the side.

He also watched as his brother hand swiped, outpowered, and even used his agility to get past the 49ers offensive line. He was on a mission.

"I'm happy I was able to perform well against this team, and for him to see a few reps, it meant a lot," explained Bosa. "I was going to be really, really upset if I went out there and had a bad week because I can't have him show me up."

Bosa was Mic'd up for the Chargers, and the first thing he says when he bumps into his little brother is, "what's up, small guy?" to which Nick asked his older brother what moves he used to get past the offensive line.

It is the typical big brother, little brother love relationship. You always want your little brother to do great things, but not better than you.

"Sometimes the competition gets a little too intense, but luckily we don't play ping pong anymore or paddles are flying all over the place," said Bosa.

Bosa was happy to see his brother. He was thankful that Rice and his brother helped him climb out of that dark hole. He spoke out about mental health after what he had suffered through last season and has become more and more of an advocate.

"It's your health long term, and you see so many people losing their minds," Bosa said last November. "There's people around me that have been losing their fathers from, from brain diseases, and it's just it's a scary thing to think of."

Sometimes athletes are seen as Supermen, nothing can get to them, and nothing can hurt them, but people forget that they are more like Clark Kent. A couple of years ago, Bosa started to see a therapist, who helped significantly with what was going on during the end of last season.

"Ever since then, I've been super open about all of it, my meditation, therapy sessions, and all that," said Bosa. "So, it was just a tough time, and I had him to help me every week."

Bosa is a workout warrior. So, after the season ends, he takes some time to himself then jumps back on it with Rice and his brother in Florida. This offseason, though, Bosa felt like it was more about getting back mentally.

"The last few months, I've been steadily climbing and climbing and climbing and I'm just back to my old self, you know, feeling great," said Bosa. "Feeling great physically feeling great mentally."

He took his time. While he did that, some changes were going on back in Los Angeles. The team had fired head coach Anthony Lynn and hired 38-year-old Brandon Staley.

The new head coach called every single one of his players on the phone to explain to them who he was, and he wanted to get to know them. He wanted to show the players that he cared for them as people, not only as players.

"It's pretty obvious that this is who he is, and he's really passionate and knowledgeable about every single position," said Bosa. "He's a younger guy who listens and knows how to take care of us."

The head coach would talk to Bosa here and there but knew that his star pass rusher wouldn't be coming until mandatory minicamp. When Bosa showed up in Costa Mesa, he sat down with his head coach, and they just talked for a little over two hours. Bosa opened up to his coach about what he had gone through last season.

"I think that for him to be so outspoken," said Staley. "It's very courageous to me; there's a lot of bravery. Then there's also a selflessness too because he's not thinking about himself. He's thinking about other people. Anytime you have a star player like him that thinks that way, it's amazing."

He also talked football with Staley, realizing quick that Bosa is a unique person with a high football capacity.

"He's kind of an artist," said Staley about his initial thought after meeting with Bosa. "You don't get that way without being fully invested in your game, and I think he's so insightful about the details of his craft."

Bosa was quickly impressed by his new head coach.

"He could walk in any room really and talk about technique, and it's not just like, 'Oh, yeah, what are you guys running?' It's like he breaks it down exactly what's going on technique because he loves football," explained Bosa. "He has this kind of freaky memory where he just remembers things."

Staley was also impressed with Bosa. Staley has worked with some of the best pass rushers in Chicago's Khalil Mack, Denver's Von Miller and Bradley Chubb, and L.A. Rams' Leonard Floyd and Aaron Donald.

"I learned a lot from those guys like what he sees and what his approach is, and, and tapping into that, so you can coach him better," said Staley. "I felt like he's just has a lot of insights because he's such an accomplished player."

There will be some changes to this defense, though. Since being drafted by the Chargers in 2016, Bosa has been a big reason why the defense has generated a consistent pass rush. He has played 63 games in a Bolt uniform, sacked the opposing quarterback 47.5 times, and has 109 quarterback hits.

He also had his partner in crime in Melvin Ingram. When one of them got a sack, Bosa would do his signature shrug, and Ingram would cross his arms. They were a solid duo, but that has come to an end. Ingram wasn't re-signed and is a member of the Pittsburgh Steelers.

"He was great," said Bosa about Ingram. "He was the polar opposite of me, which I mean, opposites attract. I think we had a great relationship. Great player. I learned a lot from him. But I'm just happy he found a good spot, and he's probably going to have another great year over in Pittsburgh."

The Chargers brought Kyler Fackrell from the New York Giants to compete with Uchenna Nwosu for that spot opposite the Pro Bowl pass rusher.

"I love having Kyler," explained Bosa. "I think he was a great pickup. He had a great game the other day, was really impactful. I think Chenna's definitely coming into his own. He's been a great rusher for the past few years already, and he's finally going to have a real opportunity to get a lot of reps, but I think all three of us are going to do a really good job rotating in, and we're going to all have a lot of reps every game and keep each other fresh."

The significant change in Bosa's game will be that the team will ask him to take his hand out of the dirt and drop back into coverage. "I obviously want to rush the passer," said Bosa. "It's what I love to do. It's what I love about football and what I love to work on. But this is a new skill I have to learn. So, it's been a fun challenge. It's been frustrating at times, definitely. But at the same time, anything worth doing isn't going to be easy all the time -- corny, corny saying, but it's true."

That change also came with him not being with defensive line coach Giff Smith, who has been his defensive line coach since he entered the league. Bosa has always thought highly of him.

The Chargers hired Jay Rodgers from the Chicago Bears, who coached with Staley, to be the outside linebacker's coach.

"He's definitely a very positive guy, levelheaded -- which sometimes I need that," said Bosa. "So, I'm excited to keep on getting to know him. It has been a challenge for him, too, because he was with the big guys the last few years. So, he's been open about that. It's a new situation for him. He hasn't coached edge in a while, so it's been a fun learning process for both of us."

Rodgers had spent the last five years as the defensive line coach in the Windy City before moving out west. "This guy loves football," Rodgers said about Bosa. "He's very knowledgeable about his skill set what he's trying to do. His specific blockers run and pass. So, I've really enjoyed getting to know him and see how he reacts to some of the things that we're installing."

When camp started, Bosa was excited to work with Rodgers, but there was some hesitancy about last season.

"I was a little nervous coming into camp with how I feel at some certain things that have kind of built up over the years, but I have been feeling great," said the pass rusher. "I feel like I've got my rhythm back."

When on the defensive field at Jack Hammett, Bosa did one of two things during every practice, either going through a drill or talking to Rodgers.

"He's constantly working on his body, his timing, his footwork," explained Rodgers. "And then, as far as our conversations go on the sideline, different scenarios that could come up to help him play faster because I think the more you know, the faster you can play. Faster guys like him can play the more production they wind up having."

When it was 7-on-7, or there was a special team drill, and he wasn't needed, Bosa would be at a machine or workout dummy working on his craft, as Staley put it, like an artist.

Something else that Bosa noticed without Ingram being present is that he is now the leader of the pass rushers. Make no mistake about it, Bosa isn't a ra-ra guy; he is the furthest from that. He leads by example but doesn't mind giving tips.

"I feel like it's most effective when I'm coaching guys up one on one and telling them how I see things," said Bosa. "I understand everybody rushes differently. So, I don't want to like tell him this was the only way but tell him what I see what's been successful for me."

He has been a silent leader in the pass-rushing room. He has helped guys from Nwosu to third-year player Davin Bellamy to rookie fourth-rounder Chris Rumph.

"I mean, at the end of the day, Joey has been doing this at a high level for a long time, since his rookie year, and so any advice I go to him and talk to him about anything pass-rushing wise anytime I go to him after advice," said Rumph.

Things have certainly changed a lot since last season. The team has a new head coach with a new direction. Bosa will have some new duties to go along with getting after the quarterback.

So, the fans should expect a 10-sack season and a five-interception season from Bosa?

"Hopefully, more than ten sacks, but I'll take one interception. It's all I need," joked Bosa.

Bosa said he is excited about the season to start, but there will be a lot of factors that will go into how the Chargers will do this season. He knows that one factor he can count on is his quarterback Justin Herbert, whom Bosa has been a massive advocate for a la Paul Heyman since last training camp.

"I'm excited to see what he can do this year," said Bosa about his quarterback. "Another thing that I love about him is I don't think he... I mean, he must know is that good, but I feel like he's such a humble and normal dude. So, it's like it never comes off as arrogant or full of himself for like this super talent that he is, which was he's a 6'5 fast like he's the ideal quarterback, and I think he's got a Hall of Fame future, for sure."

From everything Bosa has gone through from last season to this one, he feels re-juiced and is looking ahead and not back.

"I don't come into practice where you don't want to bump my head or anything like that," said Bosa. "I think I've done everything right to heal my brain and heal my body, so it's part of the game."

JUSTIN HERBERT

The magic and mystery of Los Angeles Chargers quarterback Justin Herbert

By Mina Kimes
ESPN.com
September 2, 2021

EUGENE, ORE. — Let's talk about the haircut.

Justin Herbert looks away, visibly distraught. Not because he's embarrassed by the haircut in question -- in December, he showed up at a Chargers news conference looking less like a golden-haired surfer god and more like a military school cadet, a visually awkward transformation that launched a thousand memes -- but because talking about the haircut means he has to talk about his least favorite subject, the one that he's been trying to avoid ever since we sat down for breakfast: himself.

Herbert stabs his pancakes with a fork. "So John Lott, our strength and conditioning coach ... he said, 'I cut my son's hair all the time.' I was like 'Sweet, you can cut mine.'" He shoves a bite into his mouth. "He cut it in the weight room, and ... that's kind of it."

But why would you let your strength and conditioning coach ...

He shrugs. "I just didn't really want to pay for a haircut, to be honest."

Offensive Rookie of the Year, \$27 million contract, face of a newly relevant franchise. And yet.

Herbert's hair has grown back, but he still looks younger than his 23 years, hunching over his plate like the biggest kid at school. He's dressed in a T-shirt and shorts that were probably sent to him by Nike; he drives an Audi sedan that was definitely a gift from an auto dealership here in Eugene (he drove it more than 13 hours from Los Angeles). Later, when I point out a Whole Foods from the car, he says he doesn't shop at the grocery store because it's too expensive. "It's just calories," he explains.

Herbert barely looks at social media. He doesn't tweet, and only joined Instagram at the end of college, when his marketing representatives made him sign up. "I don't really run it," he tells me, a little sheepishly. When I mention his public persona is somewhat inscrutable, he seems pleased. "I think the less people know about me, the better," he says. "I don't want to read an article about myself."

Herbert glances at the tape recorder. We both laugh.

When the quarterback's representative told me we were meeting here, in a crowded breakfast spot on the fringe of Oregon's campus, I was curious to see how he'd handle interactions with fans. But in the hour or so since we've arrived, no one has approached him, save the waitress who keeps wordlessly refilling his coffee (Herbert, polite to a fault, stops midsentence to thank her every time). I ask him if he's surprised he hasn't been bothered, and he shakes his head. "I don't think people care a whole lot," he says.

That is, of course, preposterous. We're in Eugene freaking Oregon; Herbert's origin story is as woven into this college town's fabric (hemp, no doubt) as beer and bicycles and Phil Knight. And unlike Knight, he actually grew up here, in the shadow of Autzen Stadium, attending football games with his grandfather as a boy. Eventually, he'd star there as the school's quarterback, solidifying his local legend by returning for a senior season with the Ducks instead of entering the draft. His picture hangs on the wall of the restaurant where we're sitting, along with Oregon sports heroes like Sabrina Ionescu, Payton Pritchard and Marcus Mariota, all clad in green and yellow.

Herbert is friendly with Mariota; the former No. 2 overall pick, now a backup in Las Vegas, owns a house in Eugene not far from where Herbert's parents live. The two quarterbacks share a marketing agency, as well as a network of Oregon alumni and friends. And while their careers seem to be headed in different directions at the moment, their NFL journeys started in the same place, with the football world questioning their ability to lead.

If the draft is a marketplace of competing ideas, the league's disdain for quieter personalities under center is one of its staler tropes -- an investing principle that persists despite numerous counterexamples, as though introversion is tantamount to sloppy footwork or a wonky release. Herbert, with his generational gifts, could be the star whose success both catalyzes a scarred fan base and shatters the myth of the outspoken Alpha. But he's reluctant to clap back, demurring when nudged for comment on how he has been perceived. So I try a different tack, pointing out that Eli Manning, two-time Super Bowl MVP, was criticized early in his career for his reserved demeanor.

Herbert furrows his brow. "I wish I knew people on the Giants roster that could explain what Eli Manning was all about -- how he acted in the huddle," he says. "I bet when he stepped onto the field, he had control of the offense. Because he had to. And maybe he is soft-spoken off the football field, and maybe he doesn't love all the attention, but I don't think loving the attention and needing it is a requirement to be a good football player."

So, yeah: Justin Herbert doesn't want to talk about Justin Herbert. But that doesn't mean he has nothing to say.

When the Chargers' offense jogged onto the field in Week 2 last season, CBS play-by-play announcer Jim Nantz was stupefied. "Well how about this," he said to his booth partner, Tony Romo. "Justin Herbert's the quarterback on the first snap!" Nantz wasn't the only one surprised to see Herbert instead of Tyrod Taylor, the team's veteran starter. When tight end Hunter Henry saw the rookie in the huddle, he asked him what he was doing on the field. "I was like, just let me call the play," says Herbert, laughing.

The quarterback, like the rest of the world, didn't know at the time that Taylor had suffered a chest injury during warm-ups when the team doctor accidentally punctured his lung ("I felt horrible for him," Herbert says. "I wouldn't wish that on anyone.") Coach Anthony Lynn told the rookie less than 30 seconds before kickoff that he was starting in Taylor's place; as the news trickled through the sideline, star edge rusher Joey Bosa walked over and slapped him on the back.

The first drive was a blur. Because the pandemic had abbreviated the NFL's offseason program and eliminated the preseason altogether, Herbert, who operated exclusively out of the gun at Oregon, was unusually green. He spent part of the summer in Eugene calling plays in an imaginary huddle, his brothers Patrick and Mitchell radioing in messages using a walkie-talkie. Now he was lining up in SoFi Stadium, with the Chiefs' defense bearing down on him like homesteaders descending on untouched land. His teammates were awestruck. Easton Stick, the Chargers' third-string quarterback, recalls watching Herbert flip his protection early in the series and go through his progressions before checking down to running back Joshua Kelley for a 35-yard gain. "He had probably never done that a single time in training camp," Stick says.

Herbert blew everyone away in his debut, but L.A. lost in overtime to the reigning Super Bowl champs. Then, the next week, the Chargers lost again, and again ... going 2-8 over the next 10 games. Some of the losses were chaotic, and others a little freaky -- standard stuff in recent years for the Chargers, a team seemingly subject to the whims of a vindictive special-teams god. Still, optimism abounded. The results mattered less to fans than the performance of their young quarterback, and the early returns were strong. Despite playing behind a leaky offensive line, Herbert dazzled with his arm and his legs, Fred Astaire-ing his way through crowded pockets and launching bombs downfield. He broke Baker Mayfield's rookie passing record with 31 touchdowns, and the team ended the season with a four-game win streak.

While Herbert was taken sixth overall, behind Joe Burrow and Tua Tagovailoa, he did encounter a fair amount of skepticism during the pre-draft process. Many analysts admired his physical tools but questioned his decision-making; in his final season at Oregon, where he lacked elite weapons, the quarterback occasionally locked onto his first read before taking off with the ball. Over breakfast, I confess to Herbert that I underestimated him coming out of college, in part because I didn't properly account for the context around him compared to what Burrow and Tagovailoa were working with at LSU and Alabama. "I appreciate you saying that," he says, with a gentle smile. "It can't be easy."

Herbert says he generally tries to avoid consuming analysis or coverage of his career. Last year, the Chargers, along with the Rams, were featured on HBO's "Hard Knocks." Even though the rookie quarterback was featured in a few scenes, he says he skipped the series (Stick tells me Herbert tried to hide from the cameras). His teammates describe him as a homebody, more keen on watching movies -- he loves Christopher Nolan films, especially "Inception" and "Interstellar" -- and playing board games than going out. During camp last year, when the rookies were quarantined together in a hotel, he insisted on buying a copy of Settlers of Catan, the Risk-like strategy game where players gather resources to accrue territory, for the group. Gabe Nabers, the team's fullback, says they played nearly every night. "He loves that game," says Nabers. "He'll do anything to win."

"The first time he lost, he looked at whoever won -- maybe Gabe or me or some other guy -- and said: "That won't ever happen again," recalls Nate Gilliam, a guard on the practice squad. He giggles. "I was like, 'Uh, OK ... I just met you.'"

Before the season started, the three rookies moved into a house near the Chargers facility in Costa Mesa. Herbert's teammates say they quickly learned that their new roommate was a something of a neat freak, with meticulous handwriting, a color-coordinated closet and a thinly veiled distaste for any sort of mess. Nabers says he has seen Herbert's temper flare up only once, when Nabers tried to abandon his grocery store cart in the parking lot. "The first time we went shopping, I was like, 'Eh, I'll leave it right here,'" he says, pantomiming a gentle push. "And he said: 'No. Take it all the way back.'"

Herbert, who lives alone now (he recently adopted a cat, which he named Nova, after a weapon in the video game Call of Duty), doesn't dispute this characterization. "I like things neat," he says. "Things have a place, and they should be put back where they come from." His preference for order extends to the football field, where he loves feeling confident in his ability to sort through the mess on defense and Marie Kondo his way to a first down -- pre-snap recognition, in quarterback terms. One of his favorite moments as a rookie took place on a seemingly unremarkable play, when he recognized a defensive look from the Raiders, killed the call, then reloaded it after Las Vegas adjusted to his adjustment.

"It was like a game of chess," he says. "If you could do that on every play, every drive ..." he sighs a little. "I think that's where success comes from."

Perhaps. But it also came when Herbert was immersed in chaos -- dodging free rushers and hurling passes across his body, breaking the rules that apply to less gifted athletes. His private quarterback coach, John Beck, says Herbert's natural arm talent is what enables him to thrive outside of structure. "I feel fortunate to have been around some really good throwers," says Beck, who has worked with Matt Ryan and Drew Brees. "There aren't that many people on the planet like that."

If Herbert wasn't a professional football player, he'd probably be a doctor or a science teacher. His dad, Mark, taught high school biology; so did his grandfather, who lived near the family in Eugene. Growing up, he and his brothers used to spend hours at the pond by their grandparents' house, chasing snakes and trying to trap nutria, a rat-like species of rodent endemic to the Pacific Northwest. Holly, his mother, says Herbert used to bring home various animals as pets, including one fish that jumped out of its aquarium while the family was out and died. "He was devastated," she says.

After Justin and I finish breakfast, he takes me to his parents' house, a rambler where he and his brothers grew up. One of them, Mitchell, is visiting from New York (he's a student at Columbia medical school), so the two of us sit outside, on a dusty patio set in the backyard. Mitchell points to the stretch of lawn where he used to catch passes from his younger brother when they were kids. "He was just always so athletically gifted," says Mitchell. "Justin would never say this, but people knew he was different. That's just kind of how he's always been."

Earlier in the day, I had asked Herbert how he ended up playing quarterback growing up. In his usual self-deprecating manner, he told me it was probably because his dad was the team's coach; everyone else says he was an obvious athletic prodigy, the sort of kid who could sling perfect spirals when he was barely out of diapers. At 4, he was out-throwing older boys at track and field events. At 5, he was pulling off unassisted triple plays. His high school football coach, Lane Johnson, says he first witnessed Herbert's "Rookie of the Year"-like throwing power at a little league game, when a young Justin whipped off his catcher's mask to field a bunt, barehanded the ball and threw a kid out. At the time, he was in the second grade.

Holly says she has only one memory of ever getting a call about Herbert's behavior, when a teacher phoned her to ask if she could get him to go easier on the other kids at recess. Watching him play youth soccer was a little embarrassing, she says, because her son scored all of the goals. As a boy, she says, Herbert was equally reluctant to tout his own accomplishments. "When the spotlight was on him, it was uncomfortable -- he was not attention-seeking." Holly describes Justin as a classic middle child. "Sort of the odd man out," she explains.

Herbert's aversion to self-promotion explains, in part, why he wasn't more heavily recruited in high school. After breaking his femur at the beginning of his junior year, he shot up several inches, approaching his current height of 6-foot-6. One would think a kid the size of a power forward with a Howitzer attached to his right shoulder would've enticed football programs far and wide, but Herbert wasn't heavily recruited, in part because, well, he rarely left Eugene. He visited only one quarterback camp, at his dad's request, and told his parents afterward he didn't plan on attending any more. "I don't think he fully understood how unique of a talent he was," says Beck, who notes that Herbert also didn't compete in The Elite 11, the throwing event widely attended by the nation's top prospects. "He never knew how he stacked up next to everyone else."

In the end, Herbert ended up at his dream school, Oregon, cracking the starting lineup as a true freshman under head coach Mark Helfrich. Though the team was very mediocre, Herbert was clearly very good. But when Helfrich was fired, the new head coach, Willie Taggart, declined to name the young quarterback as the starter from the jump, kindling a faux controversy when he told the media he was looking for a real leader. From that point on, Herbert was relentlessly critiqued for his understated attitude, figuratively poked and prodded all the way until the Chargers picked him in the draft. The quarterback studied biology and scored numerous academic honors, with near-perfect grades. Was he too smart? An unnamed lineman told a reporter that Herbert was extremely shy. Could he steer a team? Someone wrote a cute story about how he started a fishing club in high school. Did he like fish more than people?! (No one actually said the last thing, but you get the idea.)

It had to be exhausting. Herbert never complained in public, but others did -- teammates, coaches, friends. Joey Harrington, the former Oregon QB who was also panned for his cerebral vibe, tells me he gets frustrated watching history repeat itself year after year. "I think people have an idea of what a quarterback or leader should be," he says. "But a lot of times in the NFL, people just want you to shut the f--- up and do your job. I don't care if you're trying to motivate me -- if you don't play well, you're costing me money."

I ask him if he has advised Herbert to ignore the noise, and he chuckles. "He doesn't really care. He doesn't listen to this s---; he just does him."

It's true that Herbert mostly ignored the discourse ahead of the draft. ESPN's Desmond Howard questioned his ability to win over a locker room compared to Burrow; the quote spread like an oil spill, but Herbert says he didn't hear it until the comments resurfaced this spring, after he won Offensive Rookie of the Year. He insists he didn't care -- but concedes he did have to answer pointed queries from NFL teams, some of whom shared similar concerns. "I'd go to a meeting and they'd say, 'Well, we've heard some issues about your leadership ability,'" he says. "I said, 'Listen, I'm myself. Ask my teammates.' I'd give them examples."

One of the stories he brought up, he says, was a moment from his performance against Washington State in 2019, when there was less than a minute left in the game and the team was down by one. "I remember being on the sideline and saying, 'We practiced this every Wednesday, the 2-minute drill. We're absolutely fine. We'll go out there, we know what we're doing.'" Herbert went 4-for-4 on passing attempts on the final drive, and Oregon won 37-35.

"If you can look people in the eye in the huddle and say we're fine when bullets are flying and things seem bad ... that's my idea of leadership," he says. "Being yourself. Not being a rah-rah guy. Being the same person always."

He doesn't deny that he's an introvert but contends that the label is widely misunderstood. Back in college, Oregon's offensive coordinator, Marcus Arroyo, gave Herbert a book called "Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking." Herbert remembers a section about a developmental psychologist who studied hundreds of children, exposing them to stimulating noises and visuals as infants. One might expect the babies who eventually became quiet kids to turtle inward in response to hectic environments, he says, but the future introverts were actually the infants who wiggled and danced the most.

The book's author, Susan Cain, wrote: "It's as if they process more deeply -- sometimes consciously, sometimes not -- the information they take in about the world."

The day after I meet Herbert and his family, his current and former teammates descend on Eugene for a charity golf tournament he's hosting at a local country club, to benefit a nonprofit that funds youth sports programs. As the morning fog rolls off of the pines, Chargers wideout Keenan Allen, conspicuously dressed in a bright violet polo with matching sneakers, is sitting next to a buffet, plowing through a plate of biscuits and grits. I pull up a chair and ask him what it was like playing with a rookie quarterback after seven seasons of catching passes from Philip Rivers. "Phil has the knowledge, the experience," he says. "But as far as athletic ability?" He snorts. "It's not even close. The guy is throwing 70-yard bombs as he gets hit."

The wide receiver points to a play against the Raiders in Week 9 called X Tower. Herbert was supposed to throw the ball to Mike Williams on a post route, with Allen clearing space -- "running for the love of the game," he says. But when the safety abandoned his responsibility and left Allen in space, Herbert, who was looking to his left at a double-covered Williams, abruptly flicked the ball nearly 30 yards downfield to Allen, who was caught by surprise when it spiraled into his outstretched hands.

"Experienced quarterbacks wouldn't even look at that route," says Allen. Herbert's extraterrestrial arm talent has made all of the receivers work harder, he continues, because no one can take any plays off. "Now, when you're the third guy on the team, you can't think ... OK the ball is going to Keenan, so you don't have to run your route. You can always get the ball at any point in time."

Herbert is Rivers' polar opposite in more ways than one. Allen can't remember a single instance of the rookie screaming in his presence; Rivers was, of course, well known for his antics on the field. "Phil's gonna yell every play," Allen says, cackling. "His team, the other team, he don't care. Phil yellin'." But the wide receiver is quick to point out that, for all of their ostensible differences, Rivers and Herbert share the same competitive fervor, it just manifests itself in different ways. During the Chargers' losing streak last year, he says, Herbert used to sit by himself at his locker for hours after games in full pads, eyes straight ahead. "I had to tell him, 'Bro: Let it go,'" says Allen. "'It ain't got nothing to do with you. Leave it out on the field.'"

Allen pauses, then adds: "It's good to have a guy like that. You know he wants to win."

While the Chargers advanced to the playoffs seven times during the Rivers era, the team made it past the divisional round only once and never reached the Super Bowl. Even when the roster was stocked with talent, the organization seemed to be mired in perpetual misfortune, or playing out a Sisyphian drama where Rivers was doomed to lead endless comeback attempts, seemingly always culminating in a shanked field goal. Between the bizarre losses, the pervasive injuries and ownership's decision to skip town, Chargers fans could be forgiven for jumping ship. But then, Herbert entered the picture, and the franchise's prospects flipped overnight. While Kansas City still looms as the favorite in the conference, there's a sense among fans -- and analysts -- that Los Angeles could be a dark horse in the playoffs.

In a league where quarterback play matters more than ever, drafting a game-changing passer is a little like finding a working compass; no matter where you are, or where your team is going, you can always find your way north. Today, the Chargers' compass is posted up on the 10th hole, hitting the same shot over and over, exchanging pleasantries with every group that stops by his tee. Allen does a double take when Herbert smacks a perfect drive over the treetops, shaking his head. "Relax, my guy!"

Herbert grins. "Sometimes you get a good one, sometimes you get a bad one."

A few minutes later, Pep Hamilton, the former quarterbacks coach in Los Angeles, pulls up in his golf cart. Herbert hits an identical shot (I watch him take the same swing about a dozen times, and almost all of them follow a similar arc), and Hamilton, now with the Texans, whistles. "Jesus, Herbert," he says. "You been doing that all day?"

The quarterback shrugs. "I've had some good ones, some not-so-good ones," he says, tossing his driver in his bag.

As Herbert's Chargers teammates pass through, I pull them to the side, looking for insights. "He's like a sponge in the building -- eats everything up, absorbs so much info, wants to know the playbook more than anything. I mean, he's a biology major," says Scott Quessenberry, a backup guard. Herbert sidles up to us, and Quessenberry gestures in his direction. "He's like: 'Do you know the lifespan of organisms in the ocean?'"

"I've never said that," says Herbert.

Groups of golfers cycle in and out; the sun goes down and the tournament ends, giving way to a party next to the green. Hundreds more people show up for the festivities, lining up for barbecue and drinks and a glimpse of Dan Fouts. I spot Hamilton standing alone with a beer and ask him what it was like teaching Herbert last year. "I think he has a lot more in common with Andrew Luck than any other quarterback I've had a chance to be around in the NFL," says Hamilton, who spent just over two seasons as the offensive coordinator of the Colts. "He's a quiet leader -- he leads by example. He has an innate toughness about him, and he garners field credibility and respect as a result."

Hamilton smiles. "You can be tough without announcing you're tough."

We find a table and watch as a small crowd gathers around a makeshift stage, where a hired performer is playing covers of wedding songs. The singer strums the opening bars of "Sweet Caroline," then stops and calls for Herbert to join him. The quarterback shakes his head, but the guy won't take no for an answer, so Herbert trudges up the steps, where he's flanked by a couple of his offensive linemen. Before long, all of the Chargers still at the event have joined them; one of the linemen is belting out the chorus, and the kicker is swaying with his eyes closed, and Allen is dancing with somebody's mom. A minute or so into the song, I spot Herbert fading into the background, then trying to slip into the crowd. So do his teammates, who pull him back on stage.

Little things help Chargers' Justin Herbert grow into Pro Bowl QB

By Gilbert Manzano
Orange County Register
December 25, 2021

Justin Herbert's arm strength gets most of the attention for his weekly "wow" throws, but it's his decision-making that allows his Chargers coaches to get creative when designing plays for an offensive system that received plenty of skepticism from outsiders heading into the 2021 season.

There was doubt because Chargers head coach Brandon Staley and offensive coordinator Joe Lombardi were tasked with developing Herbert, the reigning Offensive Rookie of the Year.

Staley is a first-year head coach with a defensive background and was coaching Division III college football five years ago. Lombardi struggled as the Detroit Lions' offensive play-caller with quarterback Matthew Stafford and Hall of Fame wide receiver Calvin Johnson at his disposal, and he was fired in 2015 less than two seasons into the job.

Instead of focusing on how this new coaching staff might unlock the full skill set of the strong-armed Herbert, some offered unsolicited advice that it would be best to focus on comfort and simplicity for the second-year quarterback.

Staley half-heartedly agreed that he wanted to make life easier for Herbert, but not without challenging him. The new coaching staff pushed Herbert daily, and his being named as the AFC's starting quarterback for the Pro Bowl this week is validation that Staley and his offensive operation didn't mess him up.

There was no victory lap when the Pro Bowl announcement arrived because the Chargers (8-6) are in the middle of a playoff race with many of their best players on the COVID-19 reserve list heading into Sunday's road game against the Houston Texans (3-11).

Perhaps it's unfair to expect Herbert to carry his short-handed team in Houston, but he's done it before and against better competition. Herbert is always up for a challenge and raising the bar when it comes to preparation.

"Not only does (Herbert) accept the challenge, he usually takes it two or three steps further," Chargers quarterbacks coach Shane Day said. "We're always working on getting better at his craft. He's always working on it all the time. So whatever we present him with or whatever challenges come up, he takes them in and he responds to them and he works on it."

Herbert has exceeded expectations for his second season because he prioritized the little things that are harder to spot than his downfield passes to wide receivers Keenan Allen and Mike Williams.

"He (Herbert) works so hard on the fundamentals and Shane Day does such a good job with those guys in their individual period, just refining their footwork, refining their eyes, refining their timing," Lombardi said. "He takes it so seriously. I think sometimes when you're as talented as him, it's easy to be like, 'I don't need to do that, I can rely on all this talent.' He does not take that

approach. He takes all of those details seriously and he's committed to getting better at it every day."

Day constantly finds himself saying "wow" at Herbert's dazzling throws in practice and in games, but he's most impressed with his daily concentration.

Day listed what a typical Herbert workday looks like: Studies film on the opponent with the other quarterbacks, team meetings with Staley, offensive meetings, quarterback meetings, pre-practice to go through his repetitions, walkthrough workout, full practice and another film session.

"He's completely focused and concentrates more than I've ever seen anyone," said Day, who has 13 years of NFL coaching experience. "That's why we continue to see him get better. No matter what he's doing, he's 100% focused on that activity whether it's working on his fundamentals or whether it's in the meeting room studying the defense. It's really unique."

Staley mentioned that one of the little things Herbert has improved throughout the season is playing with a wider base in the pocket. Staley said that adjustment has helped Herbert play at a controlled pace and it allows him to extend plays while maintaining timing and rhythm with his playmakers.

One example was when Herbert shuffled to his left and moved up into the pocket to evade Bengals defenders and connected with Allen for a first down to avoid a three-and-out on the opening drive in Cincinnati earlier this month.

"The more narrow that your base is, the more that you're probably going to get sped up in your progression," Staley said. "Then, if you don't play with a base, when you have to throw accurately in the interior part of the field, you won't because you don't have your legs underneath you. That's something that he's been able to do throughout this season, just playing with a base within the pocket, which allows him to progress more rapidly."

Herbert – who is third in the NFL in passing touchdowns (32), tied for third in completions (360) and fourth in yards passing (4,058) – has flourished with accuracy and quickly going through his reads.

Initially, the Chargers' playbook consisted of traditional plays with three reads and had a variety of play-action passes to attack the deep part of the field. But as the weeks went by this season, the coaching staff expanded the playbook to utilize Herbert's mobility with naked bootlegs and plays with the offensive line moving out of the pocket with Herbert.

"The thing that I am so impressed with Justin is how much he improves week-to-week and how rapid that improvement is," Staley said, "because I think people realize how gifted he is and how special he is, but I don't think people are appreciating how much he's improving each week and the little things that he's improving at. There's still so far to go with his game, at the same time. That's the thing that I've been so impressed with. You don't know that until you get with a player. His hunger and that drive, that will that he has to become his best. I think that that's what's been impressive for me this season."

The coaches can get creative with designing plays because they trust Herbert to make smart decisions, whether that's executing the play with options or scrambling for yards. But where Herbert truly earned the trust is making the unknown happen.

"You just know he's going to do the right thing, and a lot of times not only is he going to do the right thing, he's going to make something that none of us thought would happen happen for a big explosive play," Day said.

"He can play complete quarterback. Defenses have to pick their poison. 'If we flush him, he might make a bigger play than he was in the pocket.' That's what's kinda cool about Justin's game is he keeps developing all parts of it."

Herbert has clearly exceeded expectations in his second season, but he's had his hiccups against some of the best defensive minds in the NFL in losses to the Baltimore Ravens, New England Patriots, Minnesota Vikings and Denver Broncos.

Chargers backup quarterback Chase Daniel isn't concerned about those Herbert performances because he's seen what he's done in two seasons. Daniel is focused on Herbert being the first quarterback in NFL history to throw more than 30 touchdown passes in the first two seasons to start a career, along with the many other records he's broken this season.

Herbert needs three passing touchdowns to break the single-season franchise record. The recently retired Philip Rivers owns the record with 34 passing touchdowns in 2008. If Herbert starts in the Pro Bowl (instead of playing in the Super Bowl at SoFi Stadium), he would become the first Chargers quarterback to do that since Dan Fouts in 1983.

Instead of nitpicking Herbert's game, focus on the little things or the touchdown bombs.

"A lot of people call it arm arrogance," Daniel joked about Herbert's jaw-dropping 59-yard touchdown to Jalen Guyton against the New York Giants earlier this month. "He just shows off with it. It's been pretty cool."

Daniel said former New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees is the best quarterback he's ever played with and referred to Herbert as the most talented quarterback.

Daniel has no doubt that Herbert will eventually reach the prime level of Brees. For now, he recommends simply enjoying the "wow" plays.

"He's going to get hit," Day recalled thinking when he saw Herbert unleash his wondrous touchdown pass to Guyton. "Then the ball goes up and I'm looking down in the end zone and I'm like, 'Oh, my gosh, touchdown!' Those are so wow plays for me. It's so fun to watch."

How Chargers QB Justin Herbert is navigating second-year ups and downs

By Shelley Smith
ESPN.com
November 11, 2021

COSTA MESA, Calif. -- He's been the Los Angeles Chargers' starting quarterback for more than a year now. Halfway through his second season, Justin Herbert has been through the usual ups and downs. Right now, he's is on an upswing after completing 84.2% of his passes with no interceptions in a victory at the Philadelphia Eagles and has his team tied for the lead in the AFC West with a 5-3 record.

So what has Herbert learned through all this?

Turning a negative into a teaching moment is something he has been tenacious about ever since started playing football, which he says he loves with a passion. It's why he had a 4.01 GPA in college at Oregon, where he won the equivalent of the Academic Heisman. He's smart and he cares.

The two losses prior to the win over the Eagles - Week 8 at home to the New England Patriots and at the Baltimore Ravens in Week 6 before the bye -- were devastating, as Herbert had two consecutive games with a passer rating below 70 for the first time in his career. You could see the frustration on his face. But here's what he said just a few days later:

"As tough as it may be, there was a lot of good film to watch," Herbert said. "You have to get better and, thankfully, it's a long season. We're not going to let two games get us down. It's all about coming back and handling adversity. I think that guys have done a great job of handling that this week and showing with their practice and giving their best effort. It might not go our way, but that's what's going to happen."

"That's NFL football. I think we've done a great job of responding to that, so I'm really excited to see what we can do."

And what did they do? Beat the Eagles in front of a hostile crowd of close to 68,000 by using clock management and accurate strikes to a bevy of top-notch receivers. In the end, he completed 32 of 38 passes for 356 yards and two touchdown passes and scored another touchdown with his feet, an 8-yard run to make the score 24-17 in the fourth quarter.

He was so excited, the normally stoic quarterback raised his arms in the air as his teammates jumped all over him.

"I believe it was Cover 0, took a five-step drop and kind of saw the opening ... just tried to get as many yards as I could," Herbert said.

His feet didn't leave the ground on that celebration, which is typical for the grounded QB.

After the Eagles tied the game back up, Herbert proceeded to guide his team on a 15-play, 64-yard drive that took 6:05. Herbert and company ran all but two seconds off the clock, setting up kicker Dustin Hopkins' game-winning 29-yard field goal.

The drive included two fourth-down conversions. He credited Chargers coach Brandon Staley's decision-making to go for both, the second of which was a quarterback sneak at the Philadelphia 28 that got Hopkins closer for the winning kick.

"I liked the run design on that particular short-yardage play," Staley said. "We worked on it all week and I was just really confident in our group. ... I wanted to finish that game with the ball."

Herbert also credited receivers Keenan Allen and Jalen Guyton, along with running backs Austin Ekeler and Joshua Kelley, who all made plays in that final drive. And who could forget the 49-yard cross-field strike to Mike Williams early in the third quarter, which set up a touchdown to break a 10-all tie.

"A strength of Justin's is his arm and accuracy in the deep part of the field," Staley said. "A strength of Mike Williams is his ability to judge and track it in the deep part of the field ... Even if he's not wide open, but if it's a one-on-one down the field, we feel like that is an advantage situation."

Something else Herbert has learned is to be confident throwing on the run. Staley has faith in him using that skill for short and intermediate passes as well as deep throws. And Herbert has the ability to do so while rolling to either side.

A reporter asked this question of Staley this week: Is it an unfair burden to expect Herbert to throw for 350 yards each game?

"I don't think it's an unfair burden because he is capable of it," Staley said of Herbert, who has thrown for 300-plus yards in a game four times this season and 12 times in his career. "He's set a remarkable standard because he has accomplished a lot and he is capable of a lot ... he hasn't just done it a couple of times, he's done it a bunch so far in his young career. He has certainly set a high standard for himself."

And there are nine games left and a ton of opportunity to grab, starting Sunday at SoFi Stadium against the Minnesota Vikings (4:05 p.m. ET, Fox). One thing we know about Herbert is if he makes a mistake or has a bad game, he comes back stronger and more persistent.

And it shows. He's learned it.

Facing pressure appears to be old hat for young Chargers quarterback Justin Herbert

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
October 7, 2021

The breakdowns were unfortunate, glaring and — in the words of offensive coordinator Joe Lombardi — “really silly.”

Twice Monday, Justin Herbert faced almost instant pressure because of failures in the Chargers' pass protection.

The plays resulted in a short completion and a sack, the sum total being a loss of one yard.

But despite his offense going backward, Lombardi explained that what Herbert avoided on those plays was much more significant: calamity.

“That's not easy to do, what he did in those situations,” Lombardi said. “So his ball security and clock in his head, those things were just outstanding.”

Herbert has gone back-to-back games — victories over AFC West rivals Kansas City and Las Vegas — without a turnover.

With 38 attempts by Herbert in each game, the Chiefs and Raiders sacked him only three times, that number aided by the quarterback's ability to make quick decisions and even quicker passes.

“He's just got that instinct, that feel, that awareness that I'm not sure you can really teach,” Lombardi said. “It's a nice security blanket as a play caller to know that he's gonna not let a lot of bad things happen if something breaks down in front of him.”

At Oregon, Herbert was known as a quarterback who could make plays in structure. NFL scouts were less convinced of his ability to salvage situations gone wrong.

Since debuting with the Chargers in Week 2 last season, Herbert repeatedly has mocked any such concerns. He has been among the league's best when under pressure or off script.

“The most impressive thing about him is how quickly he processes the information,” Lombardi said, “how quickly he gets rid of the ball.”

After the Chargers' Week 3 win at Kansas City, Lombardi said a late-game situation involving the clock reminded him that Herbert is in only his second season.

On Thursday, Lombardi says the opposite is true when it comes to Herbert recognizing and solving issues that arise in a sudden moment.

“He seems like a 10-year veteran when you get to that aspect of the game,” Lombardi said, “just his ability to figure out where the ball should go.”

Last year, before the Chargers played at New Orleans, Lombardi said he met on the field with Shane Steichen. At the time, Steichen was the Chargers' offensive coordinator and Lombardi was a Saints assistant.

During their conversation, Lombardi said he asked Steichen when he realized the Chargers had something special in Herbert. The answer: right away.

“You could just tell he had an instinct for who was open and where to go with the ball,” Lombardi said. “I don't know how to explain it. It's pretty rare for someone as young as he is.”

Herbert will make just his 20th NFL start Sunday when the Chargers play the Cleveland Browns at SoFi Stadium. He won't turn 24 until March.

Head coach Brandon Staley this week praised his decisiveness and strength in securing the football when he does get hit, calling Herbert's calm amid chaos “the beauty of Justin.”

After some early issues in the red zone, the Chargers have scored touchdowns on eight of their last 10 trips inside the opposing 20-yard line. One of those failures came when Herbert took a knee to end the game Monday.

Herbert has seven touchdown passes — to five different receivers — over the last two weeks.

For the season, the Chargers' offense is four for four on fourth down. Herbert has passed for three of those conversions and run for the other.

Since he took over as their starting quarterback, the Chargers are 7-2 — with six wins in a row — when Herbert doesn't turn over the ball.

“You can't minimize the importance of him taking care of the football,” Staley said. “It's an 11-man operation, but he's at the heart of it all.”

Justin Herbert, Chargers' new offense could thrive thanks to his study skills

By Gilbert Manzano
Orange County Register
September 11, 2021

Nate Gilliam and Gabe Nabers had an awkward situation when Justin Herbert asked what they planned to do for housing during their rookie season with the Chargers.

Gilliam and Nabers already had plans to live together. They didn't expect the prized first-round rookie quarterback to be interested in being anyone's roommate.

"I think we found a place," Gilliam recalled telling Herbert when he revealed his plans with Nabers.

Herbert's response, according to Gilliam: "Oh, so you don't want to live with me?"

Gilliam and Nabers didn't mind making room for one more because they had become close with Herbert during training camp. They played video games, board games and ate together while staying at the team hotel.

"We didn't know that was an option," Gilliam, an offensive lineman on the Chargers' practice squad, said about living with Herbert. "We just didn't know that was actually going to come together. I think we went to dinner and we talked it over then."

The three rookies moved into a place near the team's facility in Costa Mesa and added to their teammate bonding activities by hosting a feast on the days following wins last season. The roommates cooked a "victory brisket" for the main course.

"He won't take credit for it, but he's like the head of the operation when it comes to cooking the meat," Nabers, a fullback, said of Herbert. "I'm like the sous chef and sides guy. I'm the ultimate sides guy."

The college-like atmosphere helped Herbert stay centered while dealing with the rigorous demands of being a starting quarterback in the NFL. But Gilliam and Nabers quickly learned that any roommate activities needed to be planned for early in the week.

The closer it got to game days, the more time Herbert spent in his downstairs office analyzing film and preparing for that week's opponent.

"We'd get home and he'd be in his own zone," Nabers said. "Me and Nate would have our own things that we do and I'd be in my room watching film. ... But Justin would always be downstairs in his office watching film."

Occasionally, Gilliam knocked on Herbert's door and asked if he could pick his brain on what he's seeing on film.

"With that guy, you have to give him space," Gilliam said. "Let him focus. Let him do his own thing. You can chime in. He's not going to be standoffish. ... But with those kinds of people, I feel like they just see it quicker than others in the sense that they see the big picture."

"For him, he sees the coverages. He sees certain things a different way. ... He just picked it up a little bit quicker than the normal person."

That meticulous preparation is why Herbert had instant success when he was thrust into the starter's role in Week 2 last season without getting any first-team snaps in training camp. His ability to quickly process how defenses are attacking him helped him sustain that success and deliver a record-setting rookie season.

But Herbert, 23, is starting from scratch for his second season with a new coaching staff and another scheme to learn.

He won't catch the Washington Football Team by surprise in the season opener on Sunday at FedExField. All of the Chargers' 2021 opponents have a year's worth of film on the strong-armed quarterback, but Herbert doesn't rely solely on his physical gifts to beat opponents.

He welcomes the challenge of adjusting to the adjustments defenses are sure to make against him this season.

RISK FOR LONG-TERM REWARDS

Herbert broke several NFL rookie records and earned Offensive Rookie of the Year honors under the guidance of former head coach Anthony Lynn and his staff.

The Chargers fired Lynn after Herbert's memorable rookie year because the team had back-to-back losing seasons and the front office didn't view Lynn and his staff as innovative enough to take Herbert to the next level.

By hiring a new coaching staff, the Chargers risked disrupting Herbert's comfort zone. Too many times young quarterbacks regress because they were forced to learn a new offensive system.

But that was likely never a significant concern for Chargers ownership and General Manager Tom Telesco after they witnessed what Herbert was able to do without an offseason program during the pandemic and without any starter's reps before being notified just before kickoff that he would make his debut against the defending Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs in Week 2.

A revolving door at offensive coordinator has derailed the careers of many promising quarterbacks, but learning a new system hasn't been an issue for Herbert. Consuming new knowledge has become one of his strengths.

"That's a skill," Nabers said, "being able to drop some information and just fully let the new information flood your brain. That's a skill. I think that's something (Herbert's) been pretty good at."

Herbert is in the process of learning his fifth offensive system in the past six seasons. He had three head coaches in four seasons at the University of Oregon and is now with his second NFL head coach.

Herbert, a three-time Academic All-American at Oregon, credited his study habits for being able to transition to different offensive systems.

"I think it goes back to school and having good study habits," said Herbert, a biology major who had a 4.01 cumulative grade-point average in college. "Being able to try and pick things up quickly, you have to work hard. You have to put the work in to get it figured out."

Disrupting Herbert's comfort zone after his historic rookie season was likely worth the risk for the Chargers because of his proven study habits and his new teachers.

The well-prepared Herbert is now working with Chargers coach Brandon Staley, a defensive mastermind with a knack for being ahead of trends, and offensive coordinator Joe Lombardi, who has extensive knowledge of the New Orleans Saints' offensive system, one of the most successful schemes in the league over the past 15 years.

Lombardi, Staley, quarterbacks coach Shane Day and offensive line coach Frank Smith spent the offseason program and training camp building off the Saints' scheme as a foundation and tweaking it to fit Herbert's strengths.

Lombardi spent 12 of the past 14 seasons as a Saints assistant coach. He was the quarterbacks coach for 10 of those years and got to coach Drew Brees, Teddy Bridgewater, Taysom Hill, Jameis Winston and Chase Daniel, who is now a backup quarterback with the Chargers.

"It's a very sophisticated offense, but the foundation is the same," Daniel said about comparing the Chargers' and Saints' schemes. "We're going to do stuff that Justin might do better than Drew Brees and vice versa. What Joe does is fit the offense to the quarterback. He got spoiled for so long being with Drew for 12 years. But this No. 10 of ours is special. He can throw just about every ball on the football field."

"I know Justin's excited about (the new offense). It's a lot of studying, a lot of work for a quarterback in this system. You literally have to know every single bit in the run game, the pass game, play-action game, screen game. Justin's been studying his butt off for that. It's going to be fun when the live bullets start flying."

The complex scheme and rotating personnel groupings at a rapid pace might be the toughest system Herbert has ever been asked to grasp, but he's embraced the challenge.

"It's never easy and I wouldn't really want it any other way," Herbert said. "It's obviously a tough scheme that we have to learn, but all of the guys here, they put in a lot of effort. I think it's been going pretty well so far."

'EVERYBODY GETS LOVE'

Chargers wide receiver Keenan Allen was in the process of explaining what makes this offensive system different from others when he realized Nabers was being featured in this offense.

"We got different personnel groupings," Allen explained. "Gabe's getting catches out there. ... Obviously, that's Herb's guy. He's getting catches on hitch routes. That's a fullback, by the way."

Allen doesn't want to lose targets to a fullback, but he understands the more other players contribute, the better it's going to be for him and Herbert in the long run.

“Everybody gets love in the offense and that’s good because, obviously, I get doubled a lot,” said Allen, a four-time Pro Bowl receiver. “Mike (Williams) gets doubled sometimes in the red zone. Jared (Cook) will get doubled in the red zone. (Austin Ekeler) gets doubled sometimes, so if everybody is getting the ball, it’s hard to pick who to double, so it’ll open up some matchups.”

Nabers is Herbert’s guy, as Allen mentioned, but they’re no longer roommates. All three moved into their own homes for their second NFL season. Nabers and Gilliam won’t have to worry about disrupting Herbert’s “locked in” film sessions. Herbert has a new home office, but the results on the field have been the same.

Herbert has gotten his teammates in the right places and has executed the fast-paced offense smoothly in practices, according to his teammates.

“We’re going to utilize his big arm,” Lombardi said about taking downfield shots. “We’re keeping the defense on their heels, especially when a new personnel group comes in while you’re in the huddle. By the time they figure out who’s in the huddle, they’re trying to get their call in. We’ll already be breaking and then the ball snaps. It gives (opposing defenses) less time to think, the faster you can change personnel groups.

“They’re always looking for tendencies. Like when we’re in this personnel grouping, this is the call we like to make. The less time you give them to think about it, the better.”

Nabers expects the Chargers to have a variety of personnel groupings, including multiple tight ends on the field and an empty backfield.

“Any offensive coordinator is going to want to utilize Keenan, but a lot of our schemes last year were to try to get him and some of our main dominant playmakers the ball, which you always want to do, but I think the difference in this offense is this offense is trying to highlight where you’re weak,” Nabers said. “So week-to-week we’re going to try to find where is the weak point in a defense?”

“And we have weapons at every spot. ... There’s definitely different ways to get everybody the ball. It’s not an offense where you’re asleep on some plays. ‘I know I’m not getting the ball.’ If you have that mindset then you’re going to get hit in the back of the head with a ball because you never know when it’s coming.”

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

Herbert had a prolific rookie season, but he had some struggles when facing defenses with complex disguises.

But Herbert should improve in that area after spending an offseason with a defensive coach who thrived with disguises. Staley turned the Rams into the top-ranked defense in the NFL last season when he was their defensive coordinator.

Staley has made sure to throw as much as possible at Herbert and the offense during practice.

“They’ve done such a great job disguising their looks,” Herbert said about Staley’s Chargers defense. “That’s what they do such a great job of. They’re really well-coached and they have some really talented guys on that side of the ball.

It’s a special opportunity for us to go against them because they’re going to make us better and, hopefully, we’ll be able to do the same thing for them. Just to be able to see it, see their fronts, all of the different personnel and what they’re able to do, it’ll make us better.”

Staley attempted to confuse Herbert, but he quickly realized how much he has improved from his rookie season.

“What I’m aware of is that on defense, your margin for error is so much smaller against the caliber of a quarterback like Justin Herbert,” Staley said. “The margins are so small and you have to be so much more precise. That’s really bringing out the best in our defense, especially from a coverage systems standpoint because he can hit any throw that’s tightly contested. If you’re not tightly contested, those are layups for him. I think it’s really bringing out the best in our defense.”

The Chargers’ new offensive scheme has evolved since the start of training camp and the test trials in practices have concluded. The updated scheme launches Sunday and mistakes will likely occur against a stacked Washington defense led by Chase Young and Montez Sweat, but adjusting on the fly is what Herbert does best.

“It’s obviously a tough situation when you lose a coaching staff that you’ve become close with,” Herbert said. “It’s never easy. But you have to look at it as a good opportunity to learn more about football. All of these schemes and all of the things that they bring are going to be different. You get to see more football, you get to learn more. I think that aspect of my background has helped me.”

Daniel said Herbert didn’t speak much when Brees met with the Chargers’ quarterbacks on multiple occasions in the summer. Herbert, as he often does, was listening and letting Brees’ knowledge flood into his brain.

“He’s probably one of the smartest young guys I’ve been around in terms of knowledge,” Daniel said.

Herbert’s football IQ and study habits helped launch his NFL career. Now, those tools should help him sustain success with a new offensive scheme in 2021.

Justin Herbert went from ‘Justin Who?’ at Oregon to a Chargers standout in five years

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
July 27, 2021

He went from No. 2 on his team to No. 1 in his league, collecting numerous franchise and NFL records during a wholly unexpected offensive rookie of the year season.

Stunning as it was, fast-tracking is nothing new to Justin Herbert, who arrived as the sixth-string quarterback at Oregon and bolted into the starting lineup only six games into his freshman year.

To appreciate how meteoric the rise of the Chargers quarterback has been, consider that it was in August of 2016 that then-Ducks wide receiver Darren Carrington called him this:

“Justin, the freshman from Eugene. I forget his last name.”

Just five years ago — Five! — even one of his teammates didn’t know it was Justin “Herbert.” This week — as the Chargers gather in Costa Mesa for the opening of training camp — all of football knows him ... and well.

Last season, Herbert produced more passing touchdowns (31), total touchdowns (36) and 300-yard games (eight) than any NFL rookie in history.

He finished with more yards than Aaron Rodgers, better accuracy than Patrick Mahomes and a higher rating than Philip Rivers.

He was at his best under pressure, on third down and in prime time.

So, entering Year 2, Herbert is expected to be, ah, better?

“There are no guarantees in this league,” said John Beck, Herbert’s personal coach. “There are a lot of guys on the other side of the ball getting paid a lot of money to stop you. And, as a quarterback, you need your teammates too. But, in terms of what Justin can control, he has a great chance to be an amazing quarterback in this league for a long time.”

The Chargers have a new coach in Brandon Staley and a new offense that is more nuanced and places additional responsibility on the quarterback. Herbert has admitted he has a lot to learn, even as a former straight-A student.

Beck, who works with Herbert at 3DQB in Huntington Beach, predicted any stalling in 2021 will be the result of the transition to a new scheme rather than the development of the orchestrator of that scheme.

“Justin’s going to be an improved football player, no doubt,” Beck said. “He’s certainly going to be a better quarterback. If there are circumstances where the road becomes bumpy, I would believe it would be him getting accustomed to the new offense and he and his teammates building chemistry in a new system.”

Herbert, 23, faced few expectations last July. Yes, he was the No. 6 overall pick, but the Chargers already had veteran Tyrod Taylor and the full intention of starting Taylor for the foreseeable future.

Things changed in Week 2 when Taylor was sidelined by a pregame medical accident minutes before kickoff. Herbert started and performed convincingly enough that he missed just four offensive snaps the rest of the season.

Today, everyone is forecasting greater things as he prepares to operate behind a rebuilt offensive line projected to make Herbert's life easier.

He suggested that muting the outside chatter won't be a problem. Herbert insisted he'll listen only to those whose opinions matter — family, teammates, coaches — just as he always has.

This is a player who grew up grounded in leafy, tree-lined Eugene, who has experienced broken bones and busted seasons, who had only one personal coach before joining up with Beck last year.

When he was in school, Herbert worked with one guy for one hour and, \$100 later, told his father Mark that the money could be better spent elsewhere.

"The way you manage expectations is the outside expectations will never, ever, ever, ever approach your own," Staley said. "We just focus on him being as good as he can be, on him being himself, not trying to be somebody [else]."

Herbert, according to those who know him well, never has been anything but himself, even in the aftermath of his glorious 15-game NFL debut.

He returned to Oregon this summer and hosted a charity golf tournament that benefited KidSports, a local nonprofit that provides athletic opportunities for children and is the place where Herbert first experienced organized football.

His tournament sold out so fast that the field had to be expanded. More than \$150,000 was raised by Herbert and his fellow "celebrities," a group that included star wide receiver Keenan Allen along with several other Chargers.

"I was as proud watching him give back through the golf tournament as I was watching him play last season," Mark said. "There are just some bigger things in life. I think he's on the right path to seeing that."

Herbert's father never expected his middle son to be an NFL star. The family lives practically within the shadow of Autzen Stadium, home of the Ducks and Herbert's stated ultimate destination growing up.

The NFL? That's a five-hour drive away in Seattle.

Until traveling to Denver to watch the Chargers in Week 8 last year, Mark hadn't been to an NFL game since the late 1980s. He often has pondered how and why so much good has happened to his son so quickly.

He said he considered the professional fate of other notable Pac-12 quarterbacks — think Josh Rosen and Sam Darnold — and wondered, "Why him? Just dumb luck?"

"This is all new to us," Mark said. "We're just grateful and gracious that the path he's on seems like the right one. We're just parents happy that he's succeeding. Whatever it is, we're grateful for it and I think Justin is too."

It is an adjustment, your unassuming son suddenly sought for television commercials and gaining fame for things such as his latest haircut or ability to barbecue brisket.

A couple of days before the show this month, Herbert turned to Mark and said, "Dad, did I tell you I'm going to the ESPYs?" Mark went online to find out his son had been nominated for an award.

"That's the way he is about a lot of things," Mark said. "It's like, you don't need to tell anyone how good you are. If you're really any good, people are going to know."

For a player who seems to have everything and more, Herbert has experienced empty moments.

He broke his leg in high school and missed most of his junior season. He fractured his collarbone as a sophomore at Oregon. His first Ducks team finished 4-8.

There were times in college when Herbert questioned whether he belonged on a Power Five football field. At the 2020 draft combine, he said he didn't know if he was ready to be a starter in the pros because he'd never played in the NFL.

That admission generated outside doubt, former linebacker and current television analyst Emmanuel Acho saying Herbert "could potentially be one of the biggest mistakes of the draft."

Beck was instrumental in cultivating Herbert's belief in himself, along with his talent. The two bonded quickly, Beck explaining that they are "both thinkers" and learned in humbled environments rather than at elite camps.

"You just simply played ball," said Beck, 39, a former NFL quarterback.

"That's how you came up. We both came from a place where nobody's telling you how great you are. You're just self-motivated."

In June, about 16 months after Herbert admitted he didn't know if he could play in this league, Staley said the most impressive thing about the young quarterback was his presence.

He called Herbert "a commander in the offense" and pointed out how comfortable he looks going into and coming out of the huddle and making calls at the line of scrimmage.

All of this adds to the growing notion that this should be a second NFL season more special than the record-setting first.

"Justin has all the tools that you would want," Beck said.

"He's a smart kid. He's very determined. It means a lot to him to play well. He's fully invested. ... He's exactly what you want when you pick a franchise quarterback."

At football's highest level, Herbert is on his way to establishing his game, just five years after someone in his huddle didn't know his name.

Acts of Kindness: Justin Herbert hosts golf tourney to raise money for Kidsports

By Kendall Bartley
NBC16 KMTR (Eugene, Ore.)
April 9, 2021

EUGENE, Ore. - It's where Eugene native Justin Herbert started his football journey - Kidsports, a local nonprofit providing youth sports programs for kids in our area.

Now the former Sheldon Irish and Oregon Duck quarterback is entering his second year in the NFL with the Los Angeles Chargers.

The hometown hero is now giving back to the nonprofit by hosting The Justin Herbert Golf Invitational.

"Eugene's always been my home and I've loved that community and they've given me so much," said Herbert. "If I have even the slightest chance at giving back and helping them, I'd love to do it."

The Justin Herbert Invitational is on July 8th. It has a huge goal of raising \$100,000 benefitting Kidsports.

Bev Smith, the executive director of Kidsports was ecstatic: "First of all, it's incredibly heartwarming, and secondly, it just falls in line with the type of person Justin Herbert is and the family from which he leaned most of his values and principles."

Justin partnered with Kendall Auto Group, which is the presenting sponsor.

"When we partnered with Justin and talked about putting on an event that would help support the community, it didn't take any conversation at all for us to decide if Kidsports would be the right fit," said Amy Newport, the community relations specialist with Kendall Auto Group.

Kidsports was the program Justin grew up with.

"As Justin talked about an interview this year when he was going through some losing with the Chargers," said Smith, "he mentioned that he had learned the importance of winning and losing and how to manage that through Kidsports. So, really what we would like our kids to learn is that sometimes you win, sometimes you learn, and the rest of the time you should be having fun - and I think that's why Kidsports has managed to maintain its presence in the community for so long."

Kidsports is a fun program that builds friendships and stability.

As Justin explains, "I think it's huge because I take a look at my life and without football, baseball and basketball, I don't know what I'd do. I'd be in school and definitely learning, but football has been such a big part of my life and there are people all across the city that, given that same opportunity, they can shine. If we're able to provide that for them, I think it's a great opportunity."

Now, Justin is hoping this golf tournament will provide just that.

"All of the money, all of the proceeds will go to making sure that every kid will have a chance to play."

Smith explained what the money would mean to Kidsports.

"It would benefit us in all kinds of ways," she said. "Certainly we want and would love to fund free; we would love activities for children to be free, particularly for low income families, particularly families who have been affected by COVID-19 and the fires in our community. We try to find ways to get kids out here to play."

The goal of \$100,000 can go a long way, and Newport believes they are well on their way with fundraising already.

"I believe I'm being conservative in saying that we are going to blow that out of the water."

The Real-Life Diet of Chargers Quarterback Justin Herbert, Who Lives on Subway Sandwiches

By Emily Abbate
GQ Magazine
November 19, 2020

The 2-7 Los Angeles Chargers are not having an amazing season. That having been said, their rookie quarterback Justin Herbert is doing an impressive job under center. He's being touted as the front-runner for offensive rookie of the year, and if you've got him on your fantasy team, you're probably doing a little dance every Sunday. The issue seems to be on the other side of the ball—the Chargers are excelling at blowing leads. Still, the former Oregon Duck says he's just grateful to be doing what he loves every single day.

"I'm honored to be playing for a great organization," he says. "Every week is another opportunity to play the game and I'm ready to get after it." GQ caught up with him recently to chat about his diet, which involves lots of team-catered meals and a steady rotation of fast-food sub sandwiches.

GQ: When are you up in the morning?

Justin Herbert: The day starts out pretty early. I wake up at about 5 a.m., immediately brush my teeth and head out the door. I live about 15 to 20 minutes away from the facility, and I really look forward to the drive because it gives me a chance to just listen to music and unwind.

I can't eat very much in the morning. I kind of have a weak stomach, so maybe I'll reach for a Gatorade protein bar or two. I usually stick with the chocolate peanut butter flavor. We lift at 6 a.m. for about an hour, and then we'll have a couple of meetings. I usually have just the right amount of energy to get through all of this, and then at 9:00 or 10:00, I'll have two slices of bacon, three eggs over easy, and two slices of wheat toast.

Are you big on hydrating?

Definitely. I drink a lot of water throughout the day. Normally it's about five or six bottles. I try to drink at least one right when I wake up. I think hydration is really important, and we've done a good job of integrating that.

When you say "we've done a good job," who is the "we" that you mention?

Well, we have a team nutritionist, but I really just mean the team. We make it a point to drink plenty of water.

Have you ever worked one-on-one with anyone to chat about your nutrition?

When I was training prior to the draft, I used a couple of food services that catered meals and had prepackaged meals ready to go for the day. When I did that, I was focused on low-dairy, low carb diets. It was a lot of protein. Now, since we're in season, I try to maintain my weight, and in that process I need to kick up the carbs a little bit.

What's for lunch?

We'll have whatever the team normally caters. So maybe it's a sandwich or it's rice and chicken—something along those lines. In the afternoon, I'll usually stop by the smoothie station that we have at the facility. In my smoothie, I put in strawberries, banana, mango, pineapple, Greek yogurt, and vanilla whey isolate protein powder.

So you're a fruit smoothie but a peanut butter chocolate protein bar guy?

I like to mix it up, you know?

And dinner?

At night after we get off, I normally just honestly stop at Subway. That's kind of what I've been living off for the past couple of weeks. Normally I'll get two sandwiches. One is a steak and cheese and then the other is the chicken bacon ranch, both on their Italian herbs and cheese bread. It's been working for me. It's a good thing to pick up on the way home.

When you're not grabbing Subway, what are some other things you may do for dinner?

If I have enough time, I'm definitely barbecuing. I've got a Traeger grill in my backyard and a bunch of Snake River Farms meats. Any time I get a chance to throw some of those on the grill, it's pretty great.

Do you have a sweet tooth?

I'm a big fan of mint chocolate chip ice cream and peanut butter cookies. But I've done a pretty good job over the past couple of months of staying away from that. Probably because I call it a night pretty soon after dinner, like at 8:10 or so. I get home at about 7:45. So I'll have dinner for like 15 or 20 minutes, and then it's always right around 8:10 that I turn the lights off.

That's pretty impressive.

I'm normally a night person and waking up early in the morning is not easy for me by any means. But it kind of comes with the job. It's something I have to do. So it's something that I've had to practice and it got easier over time. But it's still not easy at all.

Justin Herbert's misinterpreted personality becomes Chargers' gain

By Gilbert Manzano
Orange County Register
October 31, 2020

Jana Prikryl, the director of general science at the University of Oregon, didn't realize she had helped Justin Herbert change his major until a peer advisor identified him with a scream.

"Oh, my God, that was Justin Herbert," Prikryl recalled hearing when the 6-foot-6 Oregon quarterback left the office.

Herbert, now a star quarterback for the Chargers, submitted his change-of-major form to switch from biology to general science. Herbert was the second future NFL quarterback that Prikryl had assisted. Marcus Mariota was a general science major at Oregon a few years before Herbert.

"Embarrassingly, I did not know that he was Justin Herbert," Prikryl said in a phone interview last week. "I knew we had Justin Herbert and I knew he was fantastic, but I didn't put the face to the name."

Prikryl shouldn't be embarrassed. Not many knew of Herbert before he became a star at Oregon and the latest NFL rookie sensation.

Even now, as more become familiar with the name, not many truly know Herbert. Although, there were many guesses about his personality in the lead up to the 2020 NFL Draft.

Herbert was described as an introvert, also known as a shy person, and few NFL teams want a shy quarterback. But that didn't stop the Chargers from selecting Herbert with the No. 6 overall pick in April's draft.

They were well aware of Herbert's physical gifts, just like the other 31 teams, but perhaps the Chargers dug deeper in getting to know Herbert as a person.

"I think a lot of introverts get labeled with that word shy, lack of leadership," Chargers coach Anthony Lynn said. "My son is an introvert, so I raised one. I know what the tags are, but you just look at how people respond to them. That's all you need to know."

The Chargers did their personality research on Herbert and are now getting rewarded for it with weekly touchdown passes from his rocket right arm.

"Ultimately, this guy is just very talented," said Denver Broncos coach Vic Fangio, whose team hosts Herbert and the Chargers on Sunday. "Looks to me like he's made up of the right stuff to be a quarterback in the NFL, and fortunate for (the Chargers) and unfortunate for us, I think they found their quarterback for the next 10 to 15 years."

Herbert has only started five games, but he's played so well that questions are now being asked. How did a quarterback who is enjoying a historic NFL start that rivals Patrick Mahomes and Dan Marino become available at No. 6 for the Chargers?

Why didn't the Washington Football Team take Herbert second overall and why didn't other quarterback-needy teams leapfrog the Chargers in the draft order to take him?

Many draft experts described Herbert as having all the physical tools, but somehow that wasn't enough to shake the introvert label that hung like a dark cloud.

Of course, it wasn't all because of Herbert's quiet demeanor, but it likely played a part in why teams were skeptical, and it goes to show that swagger isn't everything. Sometimes saying less means there's more of other leadership qualities.

Herbert won't say teams got it wrong by passing on him and making him the third quarterback selected – that's not his personality – but he did say the introvert tag was incorrect.

"I wouldn't say that's fairly accurate," Herbert said. "I think on the surface it might appear that way, but when I really get to know people and the team, I think a lot of the guys on the team would tell you differently."

Many draft experts and talking heads have said they got it wrong with Herbert, but the Chargers should thank them because all the personality speculation they provided before the draft became their gain.

Herbert celebrated his first NFL victory against the Jacksonville Jaguars last week by giving star wide receiver Keenan Allen an enthusiastic slap on the behind.

"Yes, sir!" Herbert shouted at Allen.

That doesn't sound like a shy quarterback.

Here's how family members, teammates and former professors described Herbert as a person and leader:

THE REAL HERBERT

College recruiters also got it wrong with Herbert.

Herbert was a three-star high school recruit with no Division I FBS scholarship offers heading into his senior year at Sheldon High in Eugene, Ore. Herbert was set on attending Montana State to play with his older brother, Mitchell, before Oregon made an offer.

"He did not go to (football) camps because he practiced with his high school team," said Mark Herbert, Justin's father. "When other guys were looking for exposure to go to colleges, Justin was practicing with the little kid down the street that he'd grown up with or another kid he played middle school football with or somebody else because that was going to be their team in the fall."

Justin Herbert has a reputation for not looking ahead. He prioritizes the present and enjoyed it by playing baseball, basketball and forming a fishing club in high school.

In college, it wasn't all about making it to the NFL. It was also about improving as a biology student. Herbert agreed to be a biology professor's assistant even though it took time away from football.

But helping the little kid down the street and having extracurricular activities didn't help Herbert in the college recruiting process and it was probably ignored by some NFL teams.

Multi-sport prep athletes have become a thing of the past. It's now about specializing in one sport and getting as much exposure as possible by participating in 7-on-7 tournaments, creating Youtube highlight videos and announcing every college offer received on Twitter.

You can't find Herbert on Twitter, although he does have an Instagram account.

"He didn't enroll early (at Oregon) because he wanted to play his senior year of baseball with his buddies," Mark Herbert said.

Justin Herbert stayed in one place before the NFL called, never leaving Oregon while the university's coaching staff changed twice in four years.

Mark Herbert recalled being asked by a local reporter if Herbert would consider transferring if he lost the quarterback job when Willie Taggart replaced Mark Helfrich as head coach in 2017.

"What are you talking about?" the older Herbert remembered asking. "I don't understand the line of question. What's Justin going to do? Get his degree in biology, he's gonna play football and he's gonna go to medical school or he's going to go to the NFL."

"I don't know what he's going to do, but he's not leaving. That's not what Justin does."

Justin Herbert also didn't leave when Mario Cristobal took over in 2018 and then stayed for his senior season, despite being projected as a first-round selection.

Sticking around for an extra year to play with friends gave pundits more time to analyze Herbert as armchair psychologists.

He wasn't viewed as the committed teammate who wanted to help win a Pac-12 championship. Instead, he was the quarterback who struggled against Arizona State and lacked the alpha-male personality to lead an NFL locker room.

But Herbert proved in high school and college that he doesn't run from adversity and makes it work with what he has. Those are the leadership traits that went unnoticed, and he's showing it again in the NFL by elevating undrafted players such as Jalen Guyton, Tyron Johnson and Donald Parham and doing it without his top offensive linemen, Bryan Bulaga and Trai Turner.

Herbert gets everyone involved and is not afraid to ask for advice. But all of that was lost during the lead up to the draft and it became the Herbert family's gain.

Mark and his wife, Holly, were rooting for their son to play for the Chargers. They have family ties to Southern California.

Justin Herbert's paternal grandfather, Roger, played football and ran track for Fullerton College before transferring to Oregon State. Herbert's maternal grandfather, Rich Schwab, grew up in San Diego before playing football at Oregon.

"We looked at (the draft order), 'Hey, Los Angeles all the way.'" Mark Herbert said. "Oh my goodness, travel-wise, and family-wise, team-wise ... a lot of things pointing to the Chargers."

Mark Herbert credited the grandfathers for Justin's professionalism and said his son got plenty of good qualities from his mother Holly.

"I'd say Justin is fiercely loyal and fiercely focused and dedicated and definitely gets that from her," Mark said.

Justin Herbert's love for science likely came from his father, who was a science and biology teacher for middle school and high school students.

HERBERT, THE COMEDIAN

Chargers defensive tackle Linval Joseph played four seasons with recently retired Giants quarterback Eli Manning. The two-time Super Bowl champion was also described as an introvert.

Joseph sees similarities between Manning and Herbert.

"I felt like there was two different types of Elis," Joseph said. "You have funny Eli and then you have 'get the job done' Eli. Two minutes in the quarter, fourth quarter, need this drive and he woke up, and when he woke up, he made those big throws, made those big plays, and I see that in Herbert. I really do."

"I feel like he's going to have a great career and once we put everything in order, he's going to be elite. He's going to be great."

Chargers rookie wide receiver K.J. Hill can attest to Herbert's comedic side. Hill explained why Herbert was shown in a scene of "Hard Knocks" doing a lengthy "whassup" from the popular Budweiser commercials.

"I told him you gotta say the 'whassup' in the huddle," Hill said. "I told him to say it in the huddle before he called a play or something like that. It was something silly like that. He was practicing basically before he did it to get my OK if it was good or not."

Herbert and Hill texted each other after being drafted by the Chargers and have become close friends.

"Inside the locker room, (he's) making jokes, talking," Hill said about Herbert. "He has not been a quiet guy since I've been around him. We're always talking about anything and everything, so I feel like he got a great personality and great competitor side that I love about him, too."

Hill said he's a better "Call of Duty" player than Herbert, but he gave his quarterback the edge in golf.

"Justin likes to golf," Hill said. "I told him the only close thing I get to golf is Top Golf."

HERBERT, THE TUTOR

Mark Carrier, a professor at Oregon, was in need of a teacher's assistant for his Biology 212 course. Herbert was one of his best students, but Carrier assumed he didn't have time to teach the material to other students for the upcoming quarter.

"I figured no way a football player is going to have the time to do that, but in passing one day, I told him, 'Hey, you know if you weren't so busy being the quarterback of the football team I would definitely offer you this role,'" Carrier recalled.

Without hesitation, Herbert took the offer and assisted the class of about 200 students.

"It's a pretty interactive class time," Carrier said. "You can tell if people are going to hide what they know or help others along. Justin was the kind of guy who helped the people around him."

"It was clear to the people around him he understood the material more quickly than most. He didn't struggle as much as people tend to do. It's a very challenging course. He was very helpful to the people around him."

At the time, it wasn't certain that Herbert would be a top NFL draft pick. Carrier said Herbert expressed interest in a career in medicine or becoming a researcher.

"I was just really interested with how everything worked out (in biology) and science and kinda how your body processes things and kinda explaining the natural phenomena that happened around us," Herbert said.

Biology sounds as complex as breaking down NFL defenses. Herbert being able to grasp intricate material at a fast pace while also teaching it is perhaps another leadership sign (and an indicator of future success) that went unnoticed.

"That might be a reach, but it's a good analogy," Herbert said about comparing football to biology. "Having a good understanding of defenses, coverages and things like that. It definitely helps."

Herbert said his top passion has always been football. He'd said he would likely be a coach right now if he wasn't an NFL quarterback.

"Hopefully I'd be coaching the game or somewhere involved in the game," Herbert said. "I just love football too much to not be around it."

That's the real Justin Herbert. Passionate about football, but with other interests. Not the loudest, but a quiet genius with an occasional comedic side.

"I think he's more outgoing than what people give him credit for, but that's OK," Lynn said.

The Chargers said that's OK to Herbert's personality and now, as Fangio mused, they stand to reap the rewards for years to come.

Chargers' Justin Herbert learning he can't let the perils of running in the NFL slide

By Sam Farmer
Los Angeles Times
October 15, 2020

Justin Herbert, with his smooth throwing motion and surgical precision, has proven he's already a top-notch NFL passer.

Now, the 6-foot-6 Chargers rookie needs to work on his going-to-the-ground game.

He took off running in his first career game and clobbered Kansas City linebacker Damien Wilson when they collided near the sideline. Whereas Herbert nonchalantly popped to his feet, Wilson appeared knocked out cold.

Two weeks later, Herbert tore off a five-yard run against Tampa Bay and lowered his shoulder on Buccaneers safety Jordan Whitehead. This time, the defensive player got the better of the crash, as Herbert needed a few moments with his hands on his knees to compose himself. Whitehead was flagged for unnecessary roughness.

"Feet-first sliding is probably the best option I should go with," Herbert conceded later. "I grew up playing baseball so I feel like I'm pretty comfortable with sliding. It's a little tough on the grass, your cleats get stuck a little bit, but it's definitely something I've been practicing. Moving forward, I'll be better about it."

Chargers coach Anthony Lynn hopes so. He could be forgiven for watching replays of those collisions through his fingers while covering his eyes.

"Bad coaching by me right there, bad coaching," Lynn said. "I don't want him taking hits like that, like he did from the Chiefs. ... I want him to get down. I don't want him to take those hits in the National Football League."

Theoretically, Herbert could look across town for pointers from another young quarterback. The Rams' Jared Goff, the son of a former Major League Baseball player, has had sliding issues of his own.

In the two years since the NFL made a rule change — stipulating a quarterback doesn't have to slide feet first to be considered giving himself up, and instead is afforded the same defenseless-player protections when he dives forward — Goff has found himself getting "caught in between sometimes."

"I'm used to going feet first, and I have my whole career," Goff said. "And then in the last year or two, I want to go head first. I don't want to lose those three yards. But at the same time, you're kind of trying to figure out where your momentum is."

His father, Jerry Goff, who played catcher in the majors for six years, wishes his son would hit the deck more often, yet understands why he doesn't always do so.

“Do I encourage him to slide? Yeah, 100%,” the elder Goff said. “But there are times, like he did in the playoffs against Dallas, and a few times in college, where you’ve just got to deal with it and go get that first down. You’re not going to slide short in that situation. But I would say 90% or more, you’re just going to slide and play the next down.”

The dilemma is older than Red Grange. Should a quarterback risk injury by fighting for that extra yard, either by dropping a shoulder and delivering a blow, or by diving forward as a human missile?

Or should he sacrifice that extra yard or two and safely slide feet first?

“We’ve got to coach these quarterbacks out of the macho-man approach,” said Hall of Fame personnel executive Bill Polian, who thinks all NFL teams should build sliding pits at their facilities to teach quarterbacks. “Playoffs are one thing; that’s a different cat altogether. But in terms of the regular season, never lower your shoulder. Don’t take those kinds of blows. The rule is there to protect you: Go slide.”

Sometimes, even sliding feet first is unsafe. Last Saturday, Clemson quarterback Trevor Lawrence, the overwhelming favorite to go No. 1 in next spring’s NFL draft, took a shot to the helmet from University of Miami safety Amari Carter while sliding. Officials ejected Carter for targeting.

In 2006, Kansas City quarterback Trent Green absorbed a brutal hit to the head from Cincinnati defensive end Robert Geathers while sliding feet first. Green suffered a serious concussion and the replay reverberated throughout the league.

“I remember being like, ‘Yeah, see? I don’t want that to happen. I would rather dive head first, I’m in control of my head,’” recalled former Seattle Seahawks quarterback Matt Hasselbeck, who took a ribbing from his coaches about his aversion to sliding. “I sort of remember being made fun of by Mike Holmgren and Jim Zorn about how I didn’t slide, like I couldn’t slide.”

So Zorn, the former Seahawks quarterback who later coached the position for the team, unfurled a Slip ‘n Slide at practice in hopes of teaching his passers how to avoid big hits by gracefully going to the ground. He even brought in Seattle Mariners first baseman John Olerud as a sliding tutor.

“The thing was, we knew how to slide,” Hasselbeck said. “It wasn’t like we didn’t know. We just preferred to dive.”

According to NFL rules, a defender must pull up when a runner gives himself up with a feet-first slide. If a defender already has committed himself and makes unavoidable contact with the sliding runner, it is not a foul unless the defender makes forcible contact to the head or neck area of the runner with the helmet, shoulder or forearm, or commits some other act that is unnecessarily rough.

But the runner bears the responsibility of starting his slide with ample time for the defender to pull up and avoid the hit.

“Pursuing a guy, I would give him the benefit of the doubt that he was going to slide,” former Rams defensive tackle D’Marco Farr said. “But you’d better start that slide within two or three steps of me. Make it obvious. If not, I’m going to treat you as a runner that’s attacking my goal line, which means I’m going to try to knock your teeth out.”

The notion of sliding never appealed to Hall of Fame quarterback Steve Young, but not because he sought those extra yards at all costs. He just didn’t feel that sliding provided him enough protection.

“My own philosophy was sliding was a nightmare,” Young said. “Sliding is saying, ‘Just hit me in the face.’ I always thought it was much safer to go forward, find a soft spot forward.”

What’s more, Young said, officials routinely get the placement of the ball wrong when a player slides feet first.

“Inevitably, the referee gives you a spot farther back than you thought it would be, or than it should be,” he said. “It’s a weird thing. I don’t know what sliding does that creates this image that the ball’s downed earlier than it was.”

“I always thought I got a better spot when I was going forward. It’s like an optical illusion for them. When I slid, nine times out of 10 I’d turn around and say, ‘Where are you marking that? That’s not right.’”

Not surprisingly, some of the quarterbacks who had the option of playing pro baseball — notably Seattle’s Russell Wilson and Arizona’s Kyler Murray — are the most graceful sliders.

“I think playing multiple sports is a very big thing in terms of getting those extra yards, also being smart, getting down,” Wilson, selected in two different MLB drafts, told reporters in 2017. “The ability to quickly slide, too. When you hit a ball in the gap, you’ve got to get to second base and get there fast. You’ve got to know where to slide, how to get around the tag, and everything else.”

“I don’t really like sliding head first, never did when I was playing baseball. But sometimes it’s necessary. ... You’ve got to be smart in how you do it.”

Not everyone is a pretty slider. Peyton Manning got an earful from his Denver teammates in 2012 when he clomped downfield against Carolina, then executed a hideous slide — think Evel Knievel at Caesars Palace — that excavated a sizeable divot when his left knee brace burrowed into the turf.

“It’s not even worth explaining what happened,” Manning told reporters at the time. “It looked bad, and the fact that my knee brace got caught, nobody wants to hear that. It is what it is, as they say, and it’s right there on film. I’m very aware that it’s fair game for criticism and ridicule.”

In those hold-your-breath bashes of bodies, it’s frequently the quarterback who comes away staggering. There’s a reason for that.

“Justin Herbert does no tackling. None,” Young said. “And then he’s running into people where that’s all they do is tackle.”

“I used to see smaller guys in the defensive backfield, and I was like, ‘OK, I can take that guy on.’ But you’ve got to remember, even those guys, that’s all they do is tackle.”

When and whether a quarterback should slide often depends on where you’re standing, as in, which sideline.

“When it’s your own guy, you want him to get down,” Farr said. “When Kurt Warner scrambled, I’d be the first one yelling, ‘Get down!’ And I would tell him, ‘Your body doesn’t belong to you, it belongs to us.’ If he gets tagged, it affects us all.”

Young’s philosophy: Your most important play is your next one.

“Risks just to show your manhood don’t help you get to the next play,” he said. “The truth is, if you’ve still got the ball in your hand, there’s been a general failure anyway. Don’t compound it by trying to run over somebody to impress someone.”

After Herbert’s debut, while the Chargers and Chiefs were mingling on the field, Kansas City’s Patrick Mahomes offered him some words of advice: “Protect yourself on some of those runs.”

Sometimes, staying up requires getting down.

J.C. JACKSON

His family was scared he'd go to prison. How J.C. Jackson kept his NFL dream alive

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
July 25, 2022

LAKELAND, Fla. — They sold their house, their furniture, Dad's truck and his motorcycle.

Lisa Dasher and Chris Jackson surrendered their jobs and their friends and trekked 140 miles north, joining Lisa's oldest daughter in her apartment — her one-and-a-half bedroom apartment.

"We was living in the half," Lisa recalled, smiling.

Dasher, Jackson and their son, J.C., were three of the seven people wedged into the space, their lives squeezed for the most basic of reasons: They needed money.

Yes, the bills were significant. And so were the circumstances. They had to pay the attorneys trying to keep J.C. out of prison.

"Every success he's having now is very emotional to me because I know the path," Lisa said. "I tell people, 'You don't understand everything that we had to sacrifice to be here.' It just wasn't easy. But I'm glad we made it, man."

In March, J.C. Jackson signed with the Chargers, accepting a five-year contract worth up to \$82.5 million, \$40 million of which is guaranteed.

A team rebuilding its defense added one of the NFL's top cornerbacks, a tough, resilient, playmaking star coming off his first Pro Bowl appearance and four seasons removed from being a Super Bowl champion.

But the Chargers added more than that because Jackson hardly arrived on his own, his path cluttered by obstacles discouraging to staggering, including a trial that threatened not just his football but also his freedom.

Navigating such a twisting, tortured journey required the strength of more than just one man.

"J.C.," his dad said, "hasn't walked alone in his shoes."

Before he was a Hall of Famer, Edgerrin James was a blocking back, burying opposing tacklers for Chris Jackson during their time together at Immokalee High. James was two grades behind Jackson and, playing in a stacked program, had to wait his turn.

"That's how it was back in the day," said John Thomas, a longtime Immokalee coach. "The talent's usually lined up pretty good around here."

They called Chris "Action Jackson" because of his athletic prowess. He and his crew labeled themselves "The Raw Dogs" and set out to properly represent their home.

Immokalee is an everyone-knows-everyone town deep in southwest Florida and the heart of industrial agriculture in the United States. They grow an abundance of tomatoes and watermelons down here, a dusty place where there's genuine value in the dirt.

In the Mikasuki language, Immokalee means "My Home," and the pride of the people who choose to stay can be as thick as the July humidity.

"If you gonna make it out of Immokalee, you gotta get it from the mud," said Jackson, 47. "Nothing comes easy in Immokalee. It taught me to grind, to be a strong man."

Jackson had plans to leave, at least for a while, to pursue a playing opportunity at a small school in Mississippi. Lisa, who was a state-qualifying sprinter at Immokalee, remembers dropping him off at the bus station in Fort Myers and waving goodbye through streaming tears.

But after only a week or so, Jackson was on his way home, where he and Lisa soon enough were welcoming their son.

"I wanted to be in J.C.'s life," said Jackson, who was raised by his grandparents. "Everything I knew about football, I wanted to put into him."

They spent hours together in the backyard, Chris firing passes to J.C. and urging him to catch with his fingertips. At age 4, J.C. was spinning around on his father's command and snagging footballs spiraling toward his face.

Dad was training the boy's hands, hands that two decades later would carry the reminder of an Immokalee upbringing yet still ignite an NFL career rooted in the ability to catch passes thrown by the opposition.

When he was 5, J.C. scored the first touchdown of his life. It was flag football and he slipped to the outside and sprinted away from everyone. Well, almost everyone.

"I was running right with him down the sidelines, jumping and screaming," Lisa said. As she did so, she yelled, "He's gonna play for the Florida Gators! He's gonna play for the Florida Gators!"

That was the plan too, after J.C. was a four-year varsity starter at Immokalee, his two all-state plaques as a wide receiver now hanging near the school's main entrance, not far from the plaque commemorating his All-America selection as a defensive back.

Thomas has spent a quarter-century coaching at Immokalee and was in charge of the receivers when he convinced Chris that his son was too talented to play on the freshman team and instead belonged on varsity.

J.C. needed roughly one-half of one game to prove his position coach correct.

"He lit up the stadium right from the start," said Thomas, who recalls sitting in film sessions on Saturday mornings and wondering what the opposing coaches were thinking trying to cover J.C. one-on-one.

The talent was obvious, and so were the other gifts, most notably the long and athletic body that suggested J.C. could be special, as Chris remembers it, as early as elementary school.

Fort Myers-based trainer LeDondrick Rowe first worked with J.C. during the kid's sophomore season in high school. All the Immokalee players were lined up in the end zone as Rowe walked along and introduced himself one by one.

"I got to J.C. and asked him what position he played," Rowe said. "He told me wide receiver. I said, 'Dude, you're a defensive back.' Those were our first words: 'You look like an NFL defensive back.'"

All that work J.C. and his father logged in the backyard — sometimes out there past midnight — was boosted by another level of training, a tough-love regimen Chris employed throughout his son's development.

He explained that he "used to cuss J.C. out, just talk harsh to him, 'cause I knew what it takes to make it." Lisa said she often defended her son as Chris assured her his methods would pay dividends.

During an NFL game two seasons ago, while playing with New England, Jackson was beaten twice by receiver Breshad Perriman for touchdowns — 50 yards in the second quarter and 15 in the third — the latter putting the New York Jets up 27-17.

Following the second score, a television camera caught Jackson slumped on the bench, his head hanging.

"I said, 'Lisa, I'm in his ear again right now,'" Chris said, edging forward in his seat. "J.C. was hearin' his daddy. I said, 'Watch, he's gonna make a play.'"

In the final six minutes of the fourth quarter, Jackson picked off Joe Flacco. Four minutes later, New England tied the score en route to a 30-27 victory secured on the game's last snap.

"All that talking," Lisa said, "I think that's what kept J.C. strong through everything."

During his four years of two-way high school stardom, J.C. emerged as a recruit so sought after that Lisa remembers hiding when someone would show up unannounced and knock on the door.

She also recalled how the Miami coaches arrived one day for dinner in a series of black SUVs with dark-tinted windows. "They rolled up," Lisa said, "like the President."

But J.C. chose Florida — fulfilling his mother's Pop Warner projection — because he was drawn to then-coach Will Muschamp and his defensive coordinator, D.J. Durkin.

It was a shoulder injury that resulted in Jackson redshirting his first season. It was an off-field incident that cost him the rest of his Gators career.

In April 2015, Jackson was arrested and charged with four felonies in connection with an armed robbery in Gainesville. He and two companions were involved, though Jackson no longer was present when the robbery occurred, according to the police report.

Still, he faced those four counts, each carrying a minimum sentence of 10 years and a maximum of life in prison.

"I was scared. Forty years in jail? I might be dead and gone when he gets out."

— Chris Jackson, on the charges his son faced in connection to a 2015 armed robbery

When officials at Florida informed Jackson he no longer was welcome there, his desire to continue playing led him to Riverside City College, three time zones from Gainesville and an immeasurable distance from SEC country.

That November, Jackson's lone season at Riverside was interrupted when he had to return to Florida for his trial, which included five days of excruciating uncertainty for parents convinced their son had done nothing wrong but knowing a jury would make the ultimate decision.

Each morning, Chris and J.C. would drive from the cramped apartment in Lakeland to Gainesville, leaving before the sun came up, traveling the 120 miles one way in Chris' orange Dodge Charger.

Chris said they had to "scrape up gas money" to make it through the week. One of the attorneys the family hired bought J.C. a suit to wear in court.

On those otherwise quiet drives, Chris played what he called "my church music" — "Be Encouraged" by gospel singer William Becton was in heavy rotation.

J.C. would sit back in the passenger seat and, in the darkness, Chris would stroke his son's head. "Just lovin' on him," Chris said.

"I was scared," the father acknowledged. "Forty years in jail? I might be dead and gone when he gets out."

On the morning of the final day, Lisa said she wept while wrapping her arms around J.C.

"I hugged him hard 'cause I didn't know what the verdict was going to be," she said. "I told him, 'Remember this: I love you so much.' He said, 'Ma, I'll be back.' I'm looking at him like, Do you not know what you're up against?"

Chris said he sat in the back of the courtroom each day with tears in his eyes as he listened to the prosecutor characterize his son as a criminal. At some point during the week, Chris said he stopped eating.

Lisa couldn't bring herself to attend the proceedings. She remained in Lakeland where she had just started a new job, working in early child care. She wasn't allowed to have her cell phone on during business hours, meaning she spent that entire final afternoon unaware of her son's fate. Asked to explain the experience, Lisa said, "H-e-I-I."

Up in Gainesville, the jury deliberated for approximately two hours before — in the late morning four days before J.C.'s 20th birthday — acquitting him on all four counts.

At the end of her work day, Lisa retrieved her phone from a desk drawer and turned it on.

"There was so many calls, so many messages," she said. " 'Not guilty! Not guilty! Not guilty!' All of a sudden, I'm crying and crying and trying to call everybody back at once."

The jury sided with J.C. after hearing testimony that he arranged the visit in which the robbery occurred but was not otherwise involved. His attorneys argued that the evidence against him was circumstantial.

After being cleared, Jackson returned to Riverside, a step that helped put his football career back on track, leading him to Maryland, where he reunited with Durkin, then the Terrapins coach.

In his first Maryland practice, an oft-repeated story goes, Jackson intercepted three passes. He made 23 starts over two seasons and became a draft prospect some observers forecast to go as high as the second round.

"I can't let it go unknown how much we appreciate what the people at Maryland did for J.C.," said Lisa, now 48. "We thank them so much."

It was after the combine that Jackson — back home and sitting at a Tropical Smoothie Cafe having lunch with his mother — revealed how depressed he was at times in Riverside.

"He just started crying," Lisa recalled. "I said, 'J.C., what's wrong?' He said, 'You just don't know. It was so hard out in California. I was sleeping on floors, not having food. That was the time I wanted to just forget it all.' It hurt me to my heart hearing that because I had no idea that he was struggling that bad. None of us knew."

Now, though, all the pain, all the sacrifice would be swept away by the 2018 draft. Having since moved into their own apartment in Lakeland, Chris and Lisa hosted a viewing party.

J.C. was surrounded by the love and support of more than a dozen family members and friends. There was food, including cupcakes made to look like little footballs.

Over three days and 256 selections, the name J.C. Jackson was never announced. Teams took 28 cornerbacks and passed on him every chance they had.

If he was going to make it in the NFL, this cornerback with all the ball skills was going to have to reach out and steal someone else's roster spot as an undrafted free agent.

And that's exactly what Jackson did with New England, first starring during scout-team repetitions, flustering at times even all-everything quarterback Tom Brady.

As training camp unfolded, Jackson began getting time with the first-stringers. He ended his rookie season appearing in 13 games, with five starts, and launched a four-year stretch in which he intercepted an NFL-best 25 passes.

Those hands, first trained by Dad, soon secured the second-largest signing bonus in Chargers history while offering another example of Jackson's perseverance.

When his boy was just 7 or 8, Chris got J.C. a job at a watermelon processing plant to expose him to the exact sort of existence he wanted his son to avoid in life.

While he was positioned along a conveyor belt, J.C.'s hand became entangled in the machinery. Seeing blood oozing everywhere, Chris grabbed his son and carried him to a nearby fire station.

The boy spent almost a week in the hospital and required surgery to restore the mangled mess hanging from his arm. In his right hand today, Jackson literally holds the scars of his hometown.

"J.C. is Immokalee," said Rowe, the Fort Myers-based trainer. "I saw a kid struggle. I saw a kid grow. I saw a kid overcome. If you're not tough, Immokalee can overwhelm you."

Over his first three NFL seasons, Jackson played on an entry-level deal before receiving a one-year, \$3.4-million contract for 2021.

When he signed with the Chargers, he earned a \$25-million bonus on the spot. During the next two seasons, he is guaranteed another \$15 million in base salary. The kid from Immokalee had made it, had indeed gotten it from the mud.

His big payday came after Jackson watched his father work in everything from corrections to sanitation — "throwin' trash," Chris described it — before becoming a delivery driver.

Lisa has worked extensively with teenage mothers and is employed at Pace Center for Girls.

There are plans for Jackson to buy his parents a new home, something closer to Tampa ... maybe near the water.

In May, he bought each an Audi. Lisa drives hers regularly, while Chris has his in storage. For now, he prefers the 2011 orange Charger, which has eclipsed 200,000 miles.

Chris' Audi was delivered while he was at work, with no advance warning, a surprise that came with a sticker price of \$181,790.

He simply was called outside to the parking lot, where the car was hidden under a cover, with a big red bow on the hood.

There also was a note from J.C., who signed it "#27."

"Without U," the note read, "There Is No Me."

DERWIN JAMES JR.

Once called 'Pooh Bear,' Derwin James Jr.'s Florida legacy began with famous father

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
July 27, 2022

HAINES CITY, Fla. — They can still feel the reverberations around here, the beautiful aftershocks from the ferocity produced when he flexed his uncommon level of athleticism.

Derwin James' exploits echo at his alma mater to this day, even breaking the midsummer stillness of the grassy countryside that surrounds a football field flanked by a cemetery.

Yes, the locals proudly suggest, James rocked the opposition with enough force to stir the dead.

"He came at you like a flash, just a black streak comin' and then, 'Boom!' " said Olin Gee, who spent more than three decades coaching at Haines City High. "When he got to you, he was lightin' you up good."

Fans of the Chargers can nod knowingly at Gee's recollections, their eyes confirming as genuine any tale of James' ability to separate a man from his senses.

An All-Pro as a rookie, James now enters his fifth year in the NFL coming off a season in which he made 118 tackles and his second Pro Bowl.

But here's what Chargers fans don't know: Gee wasn't talking about that Derwin James — but their Derwin James.

He was recalling the original Derwin James, the father of the Chargers' safety, the Haines City Hornet they nicknamed "Blue" because, when he dropped his shoulder into someone, the poor mark turned that most unnatural of colors.

"The son was a hell of a hitter," said Gee, who coached both versions of Derwin James. "But the father, he came with bad intentions every time. People ran away from him in high school."

So the story of Derwin James Jr. can rightly start only here, with Derwin James Sr., who gifted his son everything from athletic prowess to mannerisms to an easy smile, helping shape the boy many in these parts still call by a childhood nickname: "Pooh Bear."

It was Derwin Jr.'s sister, Shaderrika, who recently had to be reminded of the order of business in this family.

"She told me, 'You act just like 'Pooh Bear,' " Derwin Sr. recalled with that identifiable grin. "I told her, 'No, 'Pooh Bear' acts just like me.' "

He was a high school running back, as well, Derwin Sr. blessed with the kind of speed that made him an annual participant in Florida's state track championships.

But he really excelled at middle linebacker, where he could smear chaos sideline to sideline and orchestrate the defense like another coach, making sure everyone was lined up properly.

If that again sounds familiar to Chargers fans, well, Derwin Sr. passed those qualities to his son, too, Derwin Jr. one of the few NFL defensive backs who calls signals in the huddle.

"His father was faster than Derwin," said longtime Florida State assistant Odell Haggins, who recruited both Derwin Jameses. "His father would knock your face off. His daddy was unreal."

Yes, Derwin Sr. had the game. He just didn't have the grades, his academic issues preventing him from fully seizing his athletic talents.

During his final year of high school, Derwin Sr. discovered he was going to be a father. Derwin Jr.'s mom, Shanita Williams, gave birth the summer before her senior year.

She had to give up going to college and running track at Haines City, where she also stood out as a sprinter.

Shanita took one job at the nearby Publix and another at a day-care center and got her own place, a \$315-a-month one-bedroom apartment. She said she still graduated on time and with honors.

Derwin Sr. was at college then, his football career expiring after two seasons at a small school in Michigan because of a knee injury.

He returned to Florida and remained with Shanita until 2001, the couple splitting when their son was 4, by which point they were convinced they had produced something special.

Although he was "Pooh Bear" — Shanita: "He always looked like a little bear to me, so plump and round and hairy." — Derwin Jr. was tough as a toddler, a burly ball whose first word actually was "ball."

By middle school, he was running past, around or through kids his size and larger.

"You could see where Derwin was going with it," Shanita said. "Even that early on I felt it. I believed it."

There remain conflicting accounts about how many times a young Derwin Jr. was hit by a car while riding his bike. Some say it happened twice; others contend it was three times. Either way, the point is "Pooh Bear" grew up as a rumbly sort of child.

Derwin Sr. said he was coaching a team of 6- and 7-year-old kids when he finally relented to the tugging on his pants leg and allowed Derwin Jr. to join them. He recalled his boy being 4 at the time.

"He was just begging to play," Derwin Sr. said. "We put that kid in some pads and the rest is history."

Having worked two places at once when Derwin Jr. was an infant, Shanita said she assumed another significant responsibility later. She emphasized the importance of succeeding in school, too, understanding the possibilities awaiting her firstborn.

"That was my other job," she said. "I made sure I did that."

Derwin Jr. began high school next door in Auburndale, where he arrived with a familiar name and too much talent and want-to to go unnoticed. He was long and lanky, an eye-grabbing sort of sleek.

The kid's body was different. Derwin Jr. was stronger than he appeared to be, ran faster than he looked to be moving and could dunk a basketball with an almost bizarre ease.

"It was crazy how freakish of an athlete he was at 15," said Auburndale basketball coach Eric Robinson. "He had that crazy athletic build. His body looked all — I don't know how else to say it — crazy."

Still, the rules were simple as presented by the man who was then the school's head football coach. No freshmen on varsity. Period.

Rick Smith was a defensive assistant at the time and still can recall the reaction when the edict was presented.

"Every one of the varsity coaches was like, 'There's no way you're keeping Derwin down,' " Smith said. "He was probably our best player already. I mean, we almost said it in unison."

By then, they had identified the enormous potential and everything else that suggested Derwin Jr. was a rarity.

The kid would lift weights to the point where coaches had to tell him to stop. He was smart and continually asking questions because he wanted to be smarter. He didn't just watch film; Derwin Jr. decoded it.

In something that felt like an instant, he was escaping his father's shadow as an ascending college football recruit but also reflecting light back on everything Derwin Sr. had been by reminding locals of the stories of "Blue" James.

Derwin Jr. has said he knew he wanted to play for Florida State as early as first grade. Then-Seminoles head coach Jimbo Fisher wasn't that far behind in that thinking.

Haggins visited Auburndale during Derwin Jr.'s first season, noticed him lining up all over the place — on both sides of the ball — and then looked at a roster. Speaking to no one in particular, Haggins recalled saying aloud, "You're telling me that's a freshman?"

When he returned to Tallahassee, Haggins said he walked into the football offices and, so excited about what he had just witnessed, couldn't resist presenting his findings in a way what would be memorable.

He opened by apologizing to Fisher for missing on Derwin Jr., admitting a kid that noticeable somehow had ducked his radar. Then Haggins played the video from Auburndale, pointed to Derwin Jr. streaking across the screen and told Fisher he was a senior.

With Fisher about to explode, Haggins said he laughed and informed his boss that Derwin Jr., in truth, was just a freshman. Fisher's response: "We need to offer him now!"

The offer did come, after just another day or two, Haggins remembering tears pooling in the eyes of both Derwin Sr. and Jr., who committed immediately. They called Shanita with the news and she cried, as well.

During his two years at Auburndale, Derwin Jr. became a star in football and track and a team-first grinder in basketball, one who applied his abundant athletic talents to the grunt work. Setting screens. Rebounding. Blocking shots.

He also emerged quickly as a leader despite being an underclassman at a new school and playing a sport that was no better than his third-best.

“Everyone heard his voice when he talked,” Robinson said. “There were things I didn’t have to worry about. I knew he’d take care of it. I mean, who’s gonna bow up to Derwin James?”

For his final two high school years, Derwin Jr. attended Haines City High, rejoining many of the kids with whom he grew up.

He continued roaming the entire field — too dynamic for one position, Derwin Jr. played them all — often accurately calling out the opposition’s plans pre-snap because he recognized what was coming from his Monday film study.

He kept pushing iron until finally, as a senior, he passed even Gee, his old Haines City coach, in the bench press. To fully grasp the significance of that accomplishment, realize that today all the Hornets’ athletes work out in the Coach Olin Gee Weight Room, named this spring after the thick, broad-shouldered career educator.

Having started at 135 pounds, Derwin Jr. maxed out in high school with a bench press of 415.

But here’s the thing about Derwin Jr. and his strength: He always has displayed a capacity to lift more than just weight.

“What you see in L.A., that’s what we saw in Polk County,” Robinson said. “Fun-loving, always smiling, always positive. People loved Derwin. And I mean not just on Friday nights.”

Said Haggins: “He puts others before him. ... Guys like that, they come around once in a lifetime.”

The display is entirely fitting, if not completely accurate. A small gold plate near the bottom identifies Derwin Jr. as the 17th overall pick of the 2018 draft — all true — but selected by the “San Diego” Chargers.

Though he changed high schools, Derwin Jr.’s commitment to Florida State remained permanent, just like the Seminoles tattoo he wore on his upper left arm long before he played for Florida State.

During his senior year, Derwin Jr. even told Haggins that the coach didn’t have to continue calling him every week, that his promise to be a Seminole couldn’t be shaken.

“He never deviated,” Haggins said. “He told me once, ‘Look on my arm, Coach. You’ve seen it. I’m coming to Florida State.’ That kind of commitment tells you something about a young man.”

If a single play could define Derwin Jr.’s time in Tallahassee, it came during his freshman season, against rival Florida.

Lined up at defensive end in a pass-rush situation, he bullied to the ground a fifth-year senior named Mason Halter, who was listed at 6 feet 6, 295 pounds, four inches taller and 80 pounds heavier than Derwin Jr. weighs to this day.

“As coaches, we all looked at each other like, ‘What?’ ” Haggins recalled. “One of the greatest plays I’ve ever seen.”

After beginning his time at Florida State with only “James” on his back, Derwin Jr. later added the nod to his father after he approached Derwin Sr. and shared his intentions.

The decision meant a jersey alternation that was minor — just the inclusion of “Jr.” — yet carried significance that was anything but.

“It was a proud moment,” Derwin Sr. said. “I told him, ‘OK, do your thing, baby.’ That was cool.”

With the Chargers, the “Jr.” appeared at the start of his second season. By then, Derwin Jr. had made an impact that was just as impressive and equally as immediate as the moment he demolished that Florida offensive lineman.

In his NFL debut, against AFC West rival Kansas City, Derwin Jr. broke up a pass some 40 yards downfield to open the second quarter.

Two snaps later he was in the backfield, sacking Patrick Mahomes.

Turns out, Derwin Jr. had time-stamped his arrival in the league even before facing the Chiefs. That August, he sent his father a training-camp video of him intercepting Philip Rivers in practice.

“He picked off Phil at the goal line,” said Derwin Sr., who still has the video on his phone. “Oh yeah, baby. That was big. I came off my seat on that one. ‘My boy! Ain’t nobody gonna stop him from bein’ great!’ ”

After signing his rookie deal, Derwin Jr. bought his mother a five-bedroom, four-bath home in a gated community in Auburndale. For his father, he purchased a truck.

Both parents still work and said they will continue to do so even if, as expected, Derwin Jr. soon signs an extension that could make him the highest-paid safety in the league.

Shanita, who has been employed at McKesson Pharmaceutical for 17 years, said she prefers to earn her own money, and that she can make no claim to the millions her son has collected.

Having spent 26 years working with at-risk youth, Derwin Sr. looks at the situation through eyes so familiar with sometimes-stark, often-unforgiving central Florida.

“I like to sit back and reflect on where we come from,” he said. “I grew up picking oranges. And not just me, but his momma’s side of the family, too. I mean, picking oranges! We all did harvest work. That’s just the way it was.”

After missing the first 11 games of the 2019 season because of injury, Derwin Jr.’s second game back came in his home state, in Jacksonville. He finished with six tackles, including one for loss, and a pass breakup as the Chargers won by five touchdowns.

Sitting in the stands that overcast December afternoon, Derwin Sr. said he stared down and marveled at what he was witnessing, the reality hitting him deeper than ever before.

“I’m looking at my son and saying, ‘Man, he’s dominating out here. He’s the best of the best,’” Derwin Sr. remembered.

“Just a little country boy from ol’ Polk County. That was like, ‘My boy is here to stay.’ ”

Having been to Southern California several times for games, Derwin Sr. said he still isn’t accustomed to seeing his son’s face all over town, whether on a billboard for Oakley or a mural in Venice Beach.

He said a friend recently sent him a picture of Derwin Jr. featured on an advertisement in a Las Vegas mall.

The image caused chills, similar to the ones Derwin Sr. said he feels when seeing “Pooh Bear” on the giant SoFi Stadium video board.

“He’s everywhere,” Derwin Sr. said. “You can’t get rid of him. ‘Damn, you everywhere, son.’ You just have to think about it, think about where we come from and say, ‘Wow!’ ”

Derwin Jr. is everywhere — on the field and off it. Sometimes, it’s like there are two Derwin Jameses. Yeah, sometimes. Like now.

'He's a G': Healthy Derwin James embracing leadership role on Chargers' defense

By Shelley Smith
ESPN.com
November 24, 2021

INGLEWOOD, Calif. -- It's two hours before kickoff for an all-important game against the Pittsburgh Steelers. And Mr. Do Everything, Play Everywhere, Derwin James Jr. is in shorts and a t-shirt (blue, of course, for his team, the Los Angeles Chargers) and no shoes. None. He's barefoot, walking along the sidelines of the field, saying hello to the Steelers he knows.

Later, I find out it's what he does before every game.

"So I can feel the surface, really feel it before I put on the cleats," the Chargers' safety explains.

Okay, every player has his routine, his superstitions, his quirks. And if this is James', with everything he does during the game, it doesn't draw stares or prompt questions from his teammates or even his opponents. He commands that much respect.

Asked where he likes to play, James answers, "Wherever the ball is."

The Chargers won the game 41-37 in what the players and coach Brandon Staley called a must-win. Not only did it move the Chargers to 6-4 and put them in the playoffs if the season ended today, but it breathed confidence into the team - which had lost three of its previous four games -- on both sides of the ball.

But no one enjoyed the win more than James, who bounded into the interview room, a huge smile on his face -- cleats still on -- and with energy that belied the effort he put into the game, with six tackles and one pass defended.

"The interception gotta be coming," James said, kicking himself after the game after a near-miss against the Steelers. He had one this season for a 15-yard return in a 28-14 win over Las Vegas on Monday Night Football in Week 4.

James sat out all of 2020 and most of 2019 with injuries (a Jones fracture in his foot cost him 11 games in 2019, a torn meniscus last season), meaning he's especially motivated now -- whether he's asked to cover, help with run support or rush the passer. He's even capable of playing receiver in a pinch.

James is as affable and chatty as anyone on the team. And he moves like nobody else in the NFL. He's 6-foot-2, 215 pounds and when he's healthy and playing to his full potential, as he has been all season due in part to the Chargers' careful conditioning and agility drills, they are often considered among the best teams in the AFC.

And here's one more thing, maybe the toughest that James does: He runs the defense and wears the green dot on his helmet, symbolizing his possession of an in-helmet transmitter. He is responsible for relaying the coaches' calls from the press box to his teammates. And when the technology failed in Week 10 against the Minnesota Vikings, James had to run to the sidelines to get the playcall, then head back to the huddle.

James is smart enough (and quick enough) to do the job well, Staley said, even though the Chargers ended up losing the game 27-20. He is a comfort to the entire defense, he added, because he doesn't make mistakes.

"The great thing about it is it's both of our times; it's his first time as a head coach and it's my first time being a signal-caller, being a captain of the team," James said. "We're both learning new challenges, new things every week. I feel like we're leaning on each other and getting better and helping our team. He's leading and I'm leading. We're going to do whatever we can every week."

The win over Pittsburgh keeps the Chargers in the thick of the playoff hunt heading into a divisional game at the Denver Broncos on Sunday (4:05 p.m. ET, CBS) and could set up a whopper on Dec. 16 at SoFi Stadium against the Kansas City Chiefs, who are currently a half-game up on the Chargers in the AFC West.

"For Derwin to keep everybody connected like he did," Staley said, "he's a G. He kept everyone connected. We had everybody banged up out there. We had a bunch of new D-linemen. Everybody kept their poise. We didn't flinch. We kept playing hard."

As did James, of course, especially with his cleats on.

The comeback story of Chargers' Derwin James: 'I'm coming back to be dominant'

By Gilbert Manzano
Orange County Register
September 6, 2021

Derwin James, the freakish athlete for Auburndale High School, was at the free throw line with an opportunity to win a road playoff game against Rockledge.

With the score tied and two seconds left in regulation, the opposing coach called two timeouts to ice the then-freshman forward. James was alone with his thoughts as the crowd rooted against him.

"The spotlight was just on him," recalled Eric Robinson, Auburndale's varsity basketball coach. "I remember shaking my head and feeling bad for the kid because he was put in that position of having to come through as a ninth grader."

James missed both free throws and was forced to prepare for overtime in the first round of the 2012 Florida boys state basketball playoffs.

"I just gave him a hug after he missed and told him we're going to make up for it in overtime and get this win," Robinson said before the Bloodhounds lost 67-63 in overtime.

Nearly 10 years later, Robinson and James haven't spoken about the missed free throws. Initially, it was because there was no need to remind a 15-year-old about his disappointment when the outcome wasn't going to change. But then it quickly became an afterthought.

James had other priorities as the school's star football player with an offer from Florida State. He was also a sprinter and long jumper for the school's track and field team in the spring.

But the cheerful freshman still used his disappointment with his free throw performance as motivation to improve in basketball, a sport he didn't play before high school.

As a freshman, James was already better than most football players in Polk County, but that wasn't good enough for the ultra competitive James, who needs to be great at everything he does.

James returned to the hardwood his sophomore season as a defensive menace who could guard any position. He did the dirty work and was on the receiving end of many alley-oop dunks during Auburndale's memorable 25-4 season.

DEVASTATING SUMMERS

The disappointment of missing two free throws in high school doesn't compare to what the Chargers' star safety has endured the past two seasons.

James, the most beloved and respected player on every team he's been on, had the worst luck on the Chargers for back-to-back summers.

"I was devastated because I had just got hurt on that same field," James said about the knee injury he sustained in last year's training camp, nearly a year after his foot injury in August of 2019.

When James, 25, injured his fifth metatarsal on his right foot while celebrating a play during a joint scrimmage against the New Orleans Saints, there was a sense on the Chargers that they could stay afloat until James returned. He missed the first 11 games of the 2019 season and the Chargers finished 5-11.

When it happened again the following training camp, there was no hope of a James comeback, at least not for that season. The torn meniscus in his right knee sidelined James for the entire 2020 season. The Chargers missed the postseason for a second consecutive year and finished 7-9.

James asked, "Why me?" And the Chargers asked, "Why him?"

Many went to James' house soon after his knee injury to lift his spirits, including former teammates Casey Hayward and Melvin Ingram, former Chargers head coach Anthony Lynn, and David Mulugheta, James' agent.

"Having those guys cheered me up at the moment, but that (expletive) was devastating," James said.

Perhaps James didn't want to discuss the missed free throws as a freshman, but he has no issues revisiting his injuries. It's a part of his comeback story, one he wants to tell with a dominant ending — even better than his memorable rookie season in 2018 when he was named an All-Pro at two positions.

"A lot of times guys get injured and they just want to try to come back and just to be healthy," James said. "No, I'm coming back to be dominant. To be the same person that I was before, and that's the kind of mindset I look at it as."

It's all starting to come together for James in his fourth NFL season. He got through August healthy, just one of many accomplishments on his lengthy checklist for 2021. Next on the list will be playing in Sunday's season opener against the Washington Football Team.

"This year I told myself, 'Everything, I will speak it to existence,'" James said. "I was positive. I'm like, 'We're gonna get healthy, we're gonna make it to the season, we're gonna speak it to existence.' Because everything you say with a tongue is powerful. That's why I believe it."

Leadership and positivity are two of many traits that make James "one of a kind," according to Chargers nose tackle Linval Joseph.

He's the heart and soul of the Chargers, and he's probably their most talented player — even on a roster that features quarterback Justin Herbert, wide receiver Keenan Allen and edge rusher Joey Bosa.

James has been compared to legendary safeties Ed Reed, Brian Dawkins and the late Sean Taylor. Current and former NFL players are clamoring for James' return, and many people in central Florida are itching to watch James on Sundays.

The traits that make Derwin James Jr. special — leadership, competitiveness, versatility, freakish athleticism — were on display in his youth while growing up in Auburndale and Haines City, two cities an hour east of Tampa, Florida.

THE MAKING OF DERWIN JAMES Jr.

"Freakish athlete" were the first two words that Robinson uttered when asked about the kid who wore No. 23 on the Auburndale basketball team for the 2011-12 and 2012-13 seasons.

"I couldn't forget him," said Rick Smith, who coached James in football and in track and field at Auburndale.

Without much prior experience, James jumped 20 feet, 11 inches in his first long jump competition as a freshman. He finished the event with a high of 21 feet, 10.75 inches.

"We only had drills at this point, but he could not stand to not actually compete," Smith recalled about James. "So I said, 'OK, I'll let you do one jump and if you look like you know what you're doing, I'll let you do the rest.' ... He nailed everything. I'm like, 'Yeah, you can keep jumping.'"

Before James was a three-sport high school athlete, he played left tackle for his pop Warner team at age 6. James was needed on the offensive line because there was a lack of size on the roster.

"I had me a couple pancakes," James said about playing left tackle. "My coach used to always get hyped and get crunked. Like that used to make the coaches get excited, especially in pop Warner. Especially if we're skinny guys getting pancake blocks on the line. I got me a couple just being more athletic and physical than guys."

The following football season, James moved to running back and primarily played the position until his freshman season at Auburndale High School. James grew up in Haines City, but his mother, Shanita Russell, moved the family to Auburndale when James was in fifth grade to keep him out of trouble.

James was required to play junior varsity on the Auburndale football team because the coaches wanted the freshmen together to build camaraderie before jumping to varsity. But James didn't want to play on Thursday nights. He knew he belonged on Friday nights, and so did most of the coaches.

James noticed a safety opening on varsity and pushed the head coach to play him there. He eventually listened and offered James a tryout in the form of an old school Oklahoma drill.

The ball was put on the 5-yard line with two defensive tackles and two offensive linemen. James, the brash freshman, lined up at safety and needed to prevent the senior running back with "hella offers" from crossing the goal line.

"I had to meet him at the hole two times," James recalled. "I won those drills and then my coach said, 'That's enough, he's playing varsity.'"

For James' first varsity game, he had two interceptions. He played on defense, offense and special teams.

"Poor guy it seemed like he was playing every down," said Smith, who's now the behavior interventionist at Auburndale.

By James' sophomore year, there was no feeling sorry for him. He was able to handle the workload after putting in countless hours in the weight room.

James went from bench pressing about 135 pounds as a freshman to more than 300 pounds by his sophomore year.

"He was a dog, as we would say," Smith said. "We would get in there and he'd lift those weights. Those weights were clanking around."

James' father, Derwin Sr., is a football legend at Haines City, but Robinson is convinced the younger James got his weight-room competitiveness from his mother.

"I'll tell you, man, I seen her at the gym and my mouth has just dropped, like, the hard work that she puts in at the gym," Robinson said. "I've told her before, 'OK, I see where your son gets it from.' Knowing how good dad was at school and then just seeing her in the gym putting in work at the gym, like there was no way (James) could lose ... he got it from both sides."

James didn't miss a weightlifting session his freshman year, and that included both sessions, one with the upperclassmen and the other with the younger students.

James wanted to push himself by lifting with the older students, but he didn't want to leave behind his fellow freshmen.

"What (James) ended up doing was he would lift with the older guys and any of the younger guys who would come in, he would go and help them and coach them up on how to lift," Smith recalled. "That was my first inclination. 'Hey, man, this guy is a little bit different.'"

Smith quickly noticed James' leadership qualities, but his determination to be better in many areas were just as noticeable. James was getting A grades in all his classes and asked Smith to help get him in the tougher classes.

"I tell my athletes all the time about this," Smith said. "Derwin was the kind of guy that challenged himself. He came to me one time and he asked me about getting into harder classes. ... He's always challenging himself."

Robinson went to every Auburndale football game in the fall of 2011 looking to recruit James to the basketball team.

"Every time (James) turned his shoulder on Friday night, I was right there," said Robinson, who's entering his 20th season at Auburndale. "So I built that relationship with him."

James had Nick Saban at Alabama and coaches at Miami and Clemson trying to get him to decommit from Florida State. But Robinson was also in a recruiting battle for James because the wrestling coach wanted James for the winter season.

"He probably would have been a state champion if he would have wrestled," Robinson said. "I just got lucky enough to get the chance to coach him."

James was torn when he had the opportunity to return to his hometown and transfer to Haines City High School for his junior and senior years. He was loyal to his teammates at Auburndale, but he couldn't pass on the chance to sport the green and white at his family's alma mater.

COMEBACK STORY

James' athletic ability is a reason why he's universally respected in the NFL, but it's also because of his leadership, loyalty and passion.

"I feel like I can relate to him so well because we just have that same love, just love playing football," Chargers linebacker Kenneth Murray said about James. "You could put me on the other side of the world, in like Antarctica, and give me a football and I'll be fine. He has that same attitude.

"He loves the game. He wants to be the best. He's competing to be the best. When you have guys like that on the team, it makes it easier for everyone else around you. I enjoy competing with him and I enjoy being out there with him. Looking forward to dominating this season with him."

No one is doubting James' comeback, especially not after the dominant training camp he had last month. He's still the same Derwin James, the do-it-all defensive stud who always seeks the best.

James challenged Allen, a four-time Pro Bowl wideout, throughout training camp, and called out 49ers All-Pro tight end George Kittle when his team came to Costa Mesa for joint practices.

"He's just kind of a freak of nature," Kittle said after James got in front of him at the goal line to intercept a Jimmy Garoppolo pass and return it for a touchdown to end the joint practice. "He can do whatever you like. He can follow. He can chase you, he can be in your hip, he can play on top, he can try to jam you at the line."

James is back to playing safety, linebacker, cornerback and edge rusher for the Chargers. But the positionless player picked up two more roles for the 2021 season. He'll be calling the plays for the defense and was named a team captain to start the season.

It's strange that the Chargers' top leader has never started a season with a "C" on his jersey. But he quickly won over his teammates during his rookie season and was providing leadership from afar while rehabbing his injuries to start the past two seasons.

Chargers coach Brandon Staley has coached the NFL's best defensive players in the past four years, from the Rams' Aaron Donald and Jalen Ramsey to the Chicago Bears' Khalil Mack to the Denver Broncos' Von Miller and Justin Simmons.

But Staley made a case for why the 6-foot-2, 215-pound James is the most complete player in the NFL.

"There aren't many players like him in the league on any side of the ball," Staley said. "There aren't many players like Derwin James because you have rare talent. Rare talent. Rare size and speed, which are critical factors for the position. He has rare skills for the position. He can do anything on the field and play anywhere. He's your signal-caller. I'm not aware of any other (defensive backs) in the league that are the signal caller.

"You can make the case that he's the leader of our entire football team and the face of your football team — certainly one of them. I haven't been around too many guys like that regardless of the position. Normally, it's quarterbacks. Derwin is one of the few defensive players that I'm aware of in the league that can carry that mantle."

Bosa wants to see James put it all together in 2021 and he's not going to let anyone get in the way. That's why Bosa shoved 49ers wide receiver River Cracraft when he tried to get in James' face during the joint practices.

"Joey don't even act like that," James said about Bosa participating in the camp scuffle. "That's my brother. I treat all them boys as my brothers. Every day is bigger than football for me. You can ask anybody in the locker room. I'm always, 'Man, how's your family?' I want to have a relationship bigger than football. That way when we are in the heat of the battle, I know you got my back.

"See, I know Joey Bosa has my back. Same thing vice versa, man. I have his back."

It makes Bosa happy when he sees pictures of him and James on the field together because it's a glimpse of what they plan to do for the 2021 season.

"I love looking at pictures of us both lining up on the edge together," Bosa said. "It's a scary sight. I always say he's one of the best in the league and I truly believe that at any position, honestly. He's one of the most gifted athletes I've ever seen. And his energy is unbelievable. So just to see him out there happy and healthy, it's great."

It's hard not to be happy for James, just like it was hard not to be disappointed for him when the devastating injuries occurred.

"The kid always had a smile on his face," Robinson said. "He just continues to bounce back. I continue to see that practice clip of him and Keenan Allen going at it. I've seen that clip probably 20 times. And man, I just get chills every time I see it because it just shows the hard work."

James' latest comeback story is almost complete. Auburndale and Haines City will be watching James and Chargers start the season Sunday in Washington.

They want to see James dominate the 2021 season.

"I'm healthy," James said. "Why not?"

Why Derwin James Jr. is NFL's most unique defensive player: 'Mr. Versatility' set to do it all for Los Angeles Chargers' defense

By Jeremy Fowler
ESPN.com
August 26, 2021

COSTA MESA, Calif. -- Derwin James Jr. is a walking espresso, team-chemistry blend.

The Los Angeles Chargers had just finished a two-hour training camp session, and James, freshly stretched, was conducting an animated FaceTime call -- or at least he was trying. He couldn't help himself, engaging every teammate who walked past while he swayed, swung his hair or smirked.

For the Chargers' standout, everyone is a "bro," from offensive linemen to cornerbacks, and they all got shoulder pats from James' yellow-gloved hand or shoutouts as they crossed his vision during the call. Safeties who blitz, play in the post and cover tight ends in the slot were subject to multitasking.

After ending the call, the gifted defensive back greeted a credentialed bro under a tent, made clear his two-year absence is over, those injury labels buried somewhere in L.A. and his league takeover back on.

"I'm not out here half-stepping; I'm not worried about getting injured, bro," James told ESPN. "I'm out here, full speed. That's the only way I know how to play the game.

"It just feels good to be back playing football."

The Chargers don't seem to care that James has missed 27 games over the past two years due to foot surgery in 2019 and a torn meniscus in 2020. The NFL is a cold, calculated business known to discard injury-plagued players, yet the Chargers are building their entire defense around James, adding more cornerback duties to his already loaded plate. His otherworldly talent is the primary reason, with a 6-foot-2, 215-pound frame emblematic of today's positionless football that coaches covet. In a given practice, James will line up as a safety, corner, linebacker or on the edge, all while handling the green dot and calling the defense.

The possibilities seemed endless in 2018, when a healthy James burst onto the scene as a first-round rookie with 105 tackles, 3.5 sacks, 3 interceptions and 13 pass breakups. And anyone watching James move with no limitations this camp has no doubt he can again make a massive impact.

His recent interception and 99-yard return when guarding San Francisco 49ers tight end George Kittle in a joint practice even hyped up LeBron James on social media.

But the Chargers might be even more excited about his leadership. The way the team sees it, he has basically been a team captain since the Chargers drafted him 17th overall three-plus years ago.

"He just has a glow," first-year head coach Brandon Staley said. "People are really drawn to him, a spirit and energy that brings people to him, brings people with him."

Some teams might be inclined to place a protective bubble around James, but the Chargers have let James be himself. There are no limitations here, largely because his injuries didn't linger.

As James described, his 2019 injury was "getting a new screw in my foot after the old one bent on me" in his fifth metatarsal. The original screw was from a surgery prior to joining the NFL. The procedure cost him 11 games that season. And then the 2020 meniscus tear was a routine four-to-five-month injury, but it just happened at the worst time: late in an Aug. 30 scrimmage.

"All of it was simple fixes," James said. "They fixed it, and I feel stronger."

This helps explain why the Chargers picked up James' fifth-year option of \$9.052 million for 2022 despite all the time missed. That says a lot about how they value him. And with other first-round picks from his class -- including quarterback Josh Allen, offensive tackle Kolton Miller and center Frank Ragnow -- already getting extensions, James is poised for a major payout if he has a big season and stays on the field.

And James spent all offseason confirming his good health, leaning heavily on a player who has been there.

Before Keenan Allen became a perennial Pro Bowl receiver for the Chargers, he fought the injury-prone label as he recovered from an early-career torn ACL. So, Allen adopted a rigorous offseason routine -- a blend of band work, mobility and balance training and running on a track that he calls "prehab" -- to engender longevity.

James asked Allen to teach him the workouts. Throughout the offseason, Allen would text James at around 10 most nights to plan a meetup at a local track near the Chargers' facility early the next morning.

"Bet," James always responded.

"We're both the same dogs -- same animal, different beasts," Allen said. "We both have that dog, get it by any means."

Allen called their training together "special" and "personal." And his advice to James was clear-cut: Know what you bring to the table, control what you can and stay in the lab.

In fact, Allen has urged James to guard him in one-on-ones all camp long because, according to Allen, "He's the best cover guy we have right now" and has the best technique, which James showed off with a deep-ball interception against Allen in the second week of camp.

James was not lacking for confidence, but he emerged from those sessions with Allen ready to address any questions about his durability.

"When I'm back to making plays on the field, those [critics] will be the same people rooting for me again," James said about those who question his long-term viability due to injury.

"I don't really get too caught up in, 'Hey, he's too injury-prone.' I'm ready to go back out there and show the world what I can do, showing he's a guy that bounced back from adversity and took it and ran with it. That was the hand I was dealt, but it's not who I am."

The time away from the game also has challenged James to refine his leadership and mental capacity for football.

He said he can walk into any position room in the Chargers' facility to fire off friendly banter, asking offensive linemen if they are ready for his blitzing or notifying receivers it's "no slants day" on the practice field. He gets away with this because he invests in teammates first.

"A lot of players are going through a lot, and guys don't often take the time to get to know players," James said. "I can go in any room -- quarterback room, O-line room, whatever -- and start off with a smile, bringing that energy every day, speaking to them. How is your family doing? How are your kids doing? All the little stuff that some people tend to forget in this game."

James also has expanded his knowledge of formations and offensive tendencies, consistently giving quarterback Justin Herbert different post-snap looks in practice. James takes copious notes on every position in defensive meetings to understand all the moving parts. And in practice, his directives to teammates at the line of scrimmage are urgent but unstartling: "Line up ... we good, we good ... I'm here."

Staley coached cornerback Jalen Ramsey, James' good friend from their Florida State days, as the Los Angeles Rams' defensive coordinator last year. And here's the ultimate compliment: James is one of the few NFL players Ramsey views as his peer, Staley said. That's how immense the talent is. So why wouldn't Staley use James as an all-over-the-field weapon?

"He can play anywhere in the deep part of the field, he can play in the half, he can play in the post, he can play in the quarter, he can play in the slot man-to-man, whether inside in the slot, he can play star -- which is our nickel -- he can play money, and he can rush the passer," Staley said. "And he's our signal caller. When you talk versatility to me, he's Mr. Versatility."

And that's what James wants, he said. Yes, he is a box safety. He's just nine other things too.

Teams have prioritized positional flexibility for years, with the Kansas City Chiefs' Tyrann Mathieu and Washington's Landon Collins being other examples at safety. Safeties who can make linebacker-type splash plays at the line of scrimmage add value to their teams.

And at linebacker, the Cleveland Browns and Pittsburgh Steelers recently drafted Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah and Devin Bush, respectively, because of the advantage their open-field speed provides. But James might be the most valuable of all because he can cover like a true cornerback at 6-foot-2.

The Chargers are expecting James to put an already decent defense over the top. They were middle of the pack on that side of the ball in 2020 despite another slew of injuries, finishing 16th both in the Football Power Index's defensive rating and yards allowed per play (5.5).

"We know we can be special, but we say that every year, so let's just not say it" has become sort of a running joke with Allen and other Chargers.

It's hard not to say it this year, though. Herbert is considered a top-10 quarterback leaguewide after just one season, and the talent at the offensive skill positions is top-shelf. With \$135 million man Joey Bosa off the edge and a good mix of complementary veterans and young talent, Staley should be able to maximize the play of the defense with his scheme.

James wholly believes the Chargers will make a deep playoff push.

"We've got the guys," he said.

And he has no plans to be sidelined for it.

"It feels amazing to be myself again," James said. "I feel like guys gravitate toward me, and being that leader that they need me to be, knowing they drafted me in the first round for a reason, is a blessing."

Chargers' bolt is BACK: 'Alpha leader' Derwin James drives culture of accountability in Los Angeles

By Jim Trotter
NFL.com
August 26, 2021

COSTA MESA, Calif. -- Chris Harris Jr. has been around long enough to understand the importance of conserving energy as training camp nears its close. So at the end of a practice last week, with one day remaining before the end of camp, the Los Angeles Chargers' 11th-year cornerback took the longer route to greet a visitor, walking along the waist-high chain-link fence until he found an opening that allowed him to reach the other side.

He took a seat on a white folding chair, removed his mouthpiece and exhaled. The light at the end of camp's long dark tunnel was bright and welcomed. But the smile on his face moments later had nothing to do with that. It had everything to do with teammate Derwin James, who walked to the fence, placed both hands on top of it and easily hopped to the other side.

The moment was a testament to not only James' youth and athleticism -- now 25, he is seven years younger than Harris -- but also a metaphor for the standout safety's approach to the season. He isn't interested in circuitous routes. He's all about direct lines, whether seeking out a ball-carrier or attacking questions about his health. He understands why people keep bringing up his physical well-being after missing 27 of 32 games the past two seasons because of foot and knee injuries, respectively, but the questions have grown stale.

Rather than attempt to sidestep them, he runs through them, just as he would an opponent. He drives home his point with an unmistakable intensity, his normally infectious smile vanishing and his eyes wide and unblinking.

"I hate when people say, 'If y'all stay healthy ...,' " he pronounced, speaking of both himself and the team in general. "I'm tired of that. I'm going to stay healthy and we're going to stay healthy. We're speaking that into the air."

If so, the Chargers could be the sleeper team of 2021. They have the 2020 Offensive Rookie of the Year in quarterback Justin Herbert, an offensive line that was upgraded with the signing of the top available center (Corey Linsley) in free agency and one of the top tackles (Rashawn Slater) in the draft, plus a deep stable of pass catchers and a defense that features impactful edge rusher Joey Bosa and athletic inside linebacker Kenneth Murray. And then there is James. His return after missing all of last season because of knee surgery is the tide that can lift almost any team.

The 6-foot-2, 215-pounder transcends labels. In some situations, he's a defensive back. In others, he's a linebacker. Then he's a pass rusher. Then a returner. There really isn't anything he can't do, which is why he was voted first-team All-Pro as a rookie. Veterans like Harris normally temper expectations or comparisons with players still seeking to establish roots in the league, but not when it comes to James.

"I've played with a lot of great people in the secondary -- Hall of Famers like Champ (Bailey) and Dawk (Brian Dawkins) -- but it's hard to say anybody is like this kid, the way he loves the game, the way he competes every day," Harris said. "He's very smart and has a great enthusiasm about him, a great spirit about him. And he has freakish talent. He can run, has great quickness, very physical and strong. The season could definitely change with him out there. He's that special of a player."

James was among the first in line when the football gods were handing out athletic intellect and ability. But what takes his stature with teammates to a higher level is his unbridled passion for the game. Some people love the game for what it can do for them; others cherish it for the competition and camaraderie. James is the latter, which has earned him the respect and the right among teammates to push and pull them.

During a recent 11-on-11 drill, the defense was short a corner. Rather than let it pass, James immediately called out the culprit, whose name has been withheld by protective team members. It might have been a simple lapse to some, but to James, it was much more than that. He's trying to establish a culture of accountability on a team where there were issues getting the right people on the field during multiple games last season.

"Do you want to be out here?!" James demanded.

Two days later, when asked about his reaction, James didn't back down.

"I challenged him because there's no reason we should ever have 10 guys on defense," he said. "If anything, we should have 12 guys out there. The coach should have to pull you off the field, not hold things up to get you on the field. That's telling me that you don't want to be there. It's all about mindset when you take the field, and having the right approach. Having 10 guys, I don't like that."

His commitment and dedication is a reason he wears the captain's "C" on his jersey, and why he has the respect of those around him. The next malicious bone you find in his body will be the first. He is unfailingly positive and enthusiastic, with an intuitive sense of how to get through to people.

"He holds guys accountable, but he does it in the right way," general manager Tom Telesco said. "He knows when to push on guys, and he knows when to pat them on the back. He has a great feel and we missed that last season. He's that alpha leader that everyone follows."

James was regarded as one of the more gifted players in the 2018 draft, but inexplicably fell to the Chargers at No. 17 because of concerns about a knee injury sustained during his Florida State career. It didn't take long for James to make clubs regret passing on him, as he started every game for the Chargers as a rookie.

He opened the season at free safety, but the coaches soon realized his athleticism and intellect could make him a force on every level. So defensive coordinator Gus Bradley switched him to strong safety to allow James to play closer to the line of scrimmage, where he could rush the passer, neutralize tight ends and, sometimes, defend receivers in the slot.

He finished the year with 105 tackles, three interceptions, 13 passes defended, six quarterback hits and 3.5 sacks, a stat-stuffing effort that immediately proved his standing as one of the most dynamic defensive chess pieces in the league. More importantly, his presence helped the Chargers reach the playoffs for the first time in five years.

"He elevates everyone around him: defense, offense, special teams. Shoot, he even elevates coaches," Bradley, now defensive coordinator of the rival Las Vegas Raiders, said recently. "You see the way he competes and the way he goes out and plays the game, and his love for the game, and it forces you to match it. If you don't, you have to ask yourself: Who's the leader here? Who's the one who's taking charge and setting the tone? It's just unique, the impact he has."

He's particularly impactful when using disrespect as a motivational tool, such as last week on the final day of joint workouts with the San Francisco 49ers. Niners wideout River Cracraft was looking to catch the eyes of the coaches and ultimately land a spot on the team's receiver-rich roster, and one way to draw attention was by showing he would not back down from anyone. Enter James.

Cracraft stuck on his block of James a little too long during an 11-on-11 drill near the goal line, nearly setting off a scrap between the sides. Two snaps later, the two had words again. Word to the wise: You might get away with poking the bear once, but not twice. On the next snap, James undercut tight end George Kittle and picked off a pass that he returned 99 yards for a touchdown, raising his right index finger as he crossed midfield.

A point needed to be made, and James made it. It didn't matter that Kittle had gotten him for a TD earlier in a similar situation. All that mattered is that he felt tested by Cracraft, by Kittle and by quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo.

"I love it. I love odds against me. I love it all. It's just how I was raised," James said in general, not specifically about the interception return. "You're going to see what type of person you are when there's pressure. Me, I'm going to come with it."

He doesn't care what's before him -- an All-Pro tight end, a former Super Bowl-starting QB, a young receiver trying to make the team, or a chain-link fence. He knows what he wants and is committed to take a direct line to get there.

"There ain't no ceiling for me," James said. "I'm going to continue to get better. I don't put a cap on me because I'm always trying to find a way to get better. I feel like I can do so many things better, so I don't try to put it like: OK, you need five interceptions, you need 100 tackles, you need to go to the Pro Bowl. I just want to be available for my teammates and come out and get better every day. Everything else will take care of itself."

ZION JOHNSON

How a bus driver nudged Zion Johnson on his unlikely path to the Chargers

By Gilberto Manzano
Orange County Register
May 4, 2022

Hank Lloyd had lost track of Zion Johnson until the plumber from his church mentioned the name while fixing the hose in Lloyd's backyard.

"That name sounds familiar," Lloyd said. "That sounds like this kid that I asked, could he play football? Why didn't he play?"

Lloyd was the mystery school bus driver that Johnson credited during pre-draft interviews for getting him to play football as a junior at Riverdale Baptist High School in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

"Well, you must be the guy," said the plumber, who heard the bus driver story from other church members.

A few weeks before last week's NFL draft, Lloyd was made aware that the lanky golfer he encouraged to play football had transferred to Boston College and developed into a first-round prospect. In a span of seven years, Johnson went from being the "nerdy kid" who was clueless about football to the most NFL-ready offensive guard in the draft.

The Chargers selected the 6-foot-2, 312-pound Johnson with the 17th overall pick last week, viewing him as an immediate starter at right guard and a cornerstone piece to their offensive line for years to come.

"What you don't want to do is reach for a tackle and then you have an issue somewhere else," Chargers coach Brandon Staley said. "We just really felt like (Johnson) is a really complete player and this guy is a first-round-level guard."

It was a stretch to assume Johnson would become a reliable offensive lineman after what he displayed in his first spring workouts at Riverdale Baptist. Johnson spent most of his first year in football in the weight room and standing on the sideline before seeing game action as a senior, including a tussle against Chase Young, the star edge rusher for the Washington Commanders.

"Undersized is an understatement," Johnson said. "I was 225 pounds and I played right tackle and our team played Chase Young, so it wasn't like we were playing scrubs or anything."

NO REGRETS

Initially, Johnson wasn't interested in football, but Lloyd kept asking and mentioned the idea to his mother, Tammie Edwards, and recommended him to the high school's football head coach, Caesar Nettles.

"He would come home and say, 'Mommy, the bus driver keeps saying why do I keep getting on the bus with these golf clubs,'" Edwards recalled. "He had to haul those to school every day."

Johnson eventually agreed to try football and Edwards gave Nettles permission to meet Johnson at his bus stop.

"I was talking to his bus driver and said, 'Well, can you point out Zion for me'" Nettles said. "He came on out (with the football team) and he was really, really raw."

Lloyd pushed football and Nettles showed interest because of Johnson's long arms and large hands and feet. He was a few inches shorter than most offensive linemen, but once he filled out his arms, he made up for it with strength.

At the NFL Scouting Combine in March, Johnson had 32 reps on the bench press, the most among offensive linemen who participated. He was measured with 34-inch arms, an 82-inch wingspan and 10 5/8-inch hands.

"With that size he had, he needs to be playing football," Lloyd said. "When you get blessed with a body like that and you're smart ... I thought he would have no problems picking up the offense."

But there were problems early on, and Johnson's size wasn't enough for Keith McIver, Riverdale Baptist's then-offensive line coach. After what would become the first of many rides home, Johnson explained to McIver in detail why the garage was structured near the front of the house.

"He was saying this and that," McIver recalled. "I was like, 'Son, just get out my car.' The first thing I thought was, 'This kid ain't going to make it.'"

McIver didn't realize it then, but Johnson's technical side and affinity for learning the ins and outs were reasons why he quickly developed into a polished offensive guard.

Staley called Johnson pro-ready and Chargers general manager Tom Telesco raved about Johnson's strength and determination. Johnson continued football at Davidson, where he struggled financially for two years due to the private college's non-scholarship program. He then went on to earn a scholarship at Boston College and left with a master's degree in cybersecurity policy and governance.

Johnson had the right coaches and mentors during his meteoric rise in football, but it was Edwards, who raised Johnson as a single mother, who made this improbable football story possible. James Stacy Edwards, Johnson's uncle, also played a role in why Johnson went from no-star recruit to the Chargers' prize first-round selection.

"It was really my mom who pushed me to play," Johnson said. "She always taught me that you should try things so that you don't have regrets later on in life. I'm glad that I tried football because that would've definitely been a regret that I would have had."

DRAFT EXPERIENCE

McIver has been one of Johnson's strongest supporters since he started football, but he was still surprised about being in the draft green room with Johnson in Las Vegas.

"If we look back and look at when you first started and look at where we are at now, we would never have believed it," McIver told Johnson before the draft began.

Johnson said he was glued to the prospect's chair, a location for TV cameras to easily spot the draftees, for the first hour until he learned he was allowed to walk around. The draft experience moved rapidly after Johnson left his seat.

Johnson was expecting to get drafted after the 19th pick, with the Dallas Cowboys at No. 24 being the most likely destination. Johnson grew up in Bowie, Maryland, an area outside of Washington D.C. Most of his friends and relatives are fans of the Commanders and dislike the Cowboys.

"Then the Cowboys were calling, that would have been very difficult," McIver recalled. "I had mentioned to (Johnson), it might be nice to go to the Chargers. He was just chilling and then the phone rang. I knew something was up because the cameras came over."

Nettles wasn't surprised about Johnson being the 17th pick and thought he would go sooner after speaking with about 20 teams who showed interest in Johnson, including the Chargers.

"Zion was one of those prospects that teams didn't really try to find dirt on because they know they couldn't," Nettles said. "He's that good of a kid. He's his authentic self. They were just trying to see what made him tick and all of that, because the film doesn't lie. And once you meet him, he's infectious."

Johnson had a whirlwind first 24 hours with the Chargers and briefly met some of his new teammates. Johnson will have plenty of time to get to know them, especially on the Chargers' starting offensive line with left tackle Rashawn Slater, left guard Matt Feiler and center Corey Linsley.

"From everybody that I've talked to, people that know him, they have all raved about him," Linsley said. "The kind of person that he is and, obviously, the kind of football player."

NEW KID ON THE O-LINE

Johnson played golf and basketball before the bus driver suggested football.

Tammie Edwards was a basketball standout at Virginia Tech, where she set rebounding records, but she knew basketball wasn't for her son.

"He didn't have the passion for basketball like I did," Edwards said. "But football, I saw it differently in his eyes. He has the passion, he loves the game. I think he loves the mechanics of it. He loves figuring things out. He likes breaking it down."

But before Johnson gave up basketball, he won back-to-back championships with his mom as the head coach of his youth team. Edwards was the only female coach in the U13 basketball league.

"Some of the fathers who would come with their kids and they would say, 'Dad, here's my coach,' and they would walk past me and look for somebody else," Edwards recalled. "No, it's me."

Johnson credited his mom for his athletic gifts and some of his coaches credited her for Johnson's competitive side.

"He is the most articulate, genuine, young man I've probably come in contact with," Nettles said. "But on the field, he's going through the whistle on every play, and he's gonna give you 110 percent on every play. And it doesn't matter if somebody gets him on one play. ... He's coming right back and he's going 1,000 percent at his throat. I think (the Chargers) have a silent assassin."

For a period, Johnson's passion was golf. He was the only middle-school student on the high school's golf team. Johnson learned to golf during summers spent with his grandmother, Rosa Edwards, who was a principal at a school in Norfolk, Virginia.

Johnson participated in the school's golf camps and received coaching from a golf instructor. But Johnson stopped carrying his golf clubs after Lloyd physically nudged him to play football.

"I gave him a little elbow to the chest," Lloyd said. "I asked him, 'Did you feel it?' He said, 'I didn't even feel it.' I was just telling him you ain't going to get hurt because you'll be doing the hitting."

Johnson gained the respect of McIver and Nettles with his work ethic and how quickly he learned the playbook, but the coaches didn't rush his development. Johnson weighed only 225 pounds when he joined the football team.

"This is a very bright kid," McIver said. "I'm thinking, like, 'OK, this is a little nerdy kid. Not sure how much he's gonna play or anything like that.' But his work ethic changed everything."

Johnson bench-pressed 135 pounds the spring before his junior season and increased that to 225 by the fall.

Johnson didn't see the field until the final game of his junior season when he filled in at left tackle for Christian Darrisaw, who later starred at Virginia Tech and was a first-round pick of the Minnesota Vikings last season.

"You need to give (Johnson) a test," McIver remembered telling the coaches. "He did a heck of a job (at left tackle) and he proved that he belonged on the team."

Johnson had a productive senior year at right tackle with Darrisaw patrolling the left side, but Johnson joined the recruiting process too late and went unnoticed until Davidson called.

"Me and Christian were pretty close in high school because our O-line coach (McIver) would have us over to the house," Johnson said. "With him going to Virginia Tech, we weren't able to stay as close because it's like, 'I want to beat you.' He's definitely someone who has pushed me, especially in high school and throughout my career, because with his level of play, I've always wanted to outdo him as a rival sort of thing."

Johnson improved at Davidson under the guidance of Matt Applebaum and Phil Trautwein and later reunited with the offensive line coaches at Boston College. With Johnson in the ACC, he got to measure his skills against Darrisaw and Virginia Tech.

McIver wore a Boston College shirt with a Virginia Tech hat when the game was at Boston College and vice versa for the game at Virginia Tech.

"I would sit on the Virginia Tech side for one half and the Boston College side for the other half," McIver said.

CREDIT TO THE BUS DRIVER

On Sunday, Johnson called Lloyd to reconnect and told his former bus driver that his advice got him drafted to the NFL.

"I told him, 'That's gonna be my second team now (the Chargers) that I'm gonna be rooting for,'" said Lloyd, a fan of the Commanders.

Lloyd, 68, coached high school basketball, volleyball and softball for 40 years before being a school bus driver. He coached former NBA players Michael Beasley, Nolan Smith and Thomas Robinson, and WNBA players Shakira Austin and Tianna Hawkins.

Lloyd's only request for Johnson was to get one of his Chargers jerseys to hang next to his Wanisha Smith jersey – another former basketball standout he coached.

"He's a great kid," Lloyd said. "He's going to be a great asset to the Chargers."

Zion Johnson reveals inside info on journey to become Chargers' new starting guard

*By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
April 29, 2022*

Zion Johnson spent most of his first full day as an NFL player in a place he'd never been before: Southern California.

The Chargers' 2022 first-round pick grew up in Maryland and went to school at Davidson and Boston College before being selected 17th overall in the NFL draft Thursday.

On Friday, Johnson traveled to meet his new team in person and take questions from the local media.

"When I was driving from LAX, I was like, 'It kind of does look like L.A. on TV with the palm trees,'" he said.

"There's this certain lighting ... it's like this vibe ... I don't know how to explain it, but it looks like L.A. on TV, like one of the cop shows."

Highlights of Johnson's first face-to-face session with reporters covering the Chargers:

Humble first steps

Johnson never played football until his junior year at Riverdale Baptist School in Upper Marlboro. Instead, he was a member of the school's golf team, having picked up that sport after trying it during a summer camp.

The first person who suggested he might be good at football was the driver of a bus Johnson rode home after golf practices. But he wasn't the one most instrumental in launching Johnson's career.

"It was really my mom who pushed me to play," Johnson said.

"She always taught me that you should try things so you don't have regrets later on in life. I'm glad I tried football because that would definitely be a regret I had."

Tammie Edwards played basketball at Virginia Tech, where she was a record-setting rebounder as a center and power forward. Johnson said his mother has been the most influential person in his life, noting her work ethic.

"A lot of the qualities she taught me," he said, "have made me the person I am today."

Asked if he also inherited his athletic ability from his mom, Johnson smiled and said: "I think most of it comes from her. She was definitely a force in the post."

From undersized to big-time

When he began playing football, Johnson said he was a 225-pound right tackle. Today, he's a 6-foot-3, 314-pound right guard.

"Undersized is an understatement," he said. "Our team played Chase Young. It wasn't like we were playing scrubs or anything."

Young, who went to DeMatha Catholic, was the No. 2 overall pick of the 2020 draft, selected by Washington. He made the Pro Bowl as a rookie defensive end.

“Really for me at that point, I wanted to play football, wanted to prove that I could be a good player,” Johnson recalled of his debut in the sport. “Being undersized, I just had to strain on every play and try not to give up a sack.”

Said Chargers coach Brandon Staley: “It’s one of those great stories of a guy that really worked at it, really developed his game. He worked at it, and here he is today.”

One of Johnson’s high school teammates was offensive tackle Christian Darrisaw, who was the No. 23 overall pick by Minnesota last year.

“He’s definitely someone who has pushed me throughout my career with his level of play,” Johnson said of Darrisaw. “I’ve always wanted to outdo him, kind of like a rival.”

The road to BC

Because he was a strong student, Johnson made it into Davidson, where he played for two seasons on a partial scholarship before money became an issue.

“There was a financial strain to my family that I didn’t want to happen anymore,” Johnson said.

So he entered the transfer portal and ended up at Boston College, he explained, because he liked the school’s academics and the football program’s history of developing offensive linemen.

In three seasons with the Eagles, Johnson grew from being a nice story of perseverance to the fifth offensive lineman selected Thursday.

Man of many languages

Johnson graduated from Boston College in 2020 with a degree in computer science and earned his master’s degree in cyber security last fall.

He said he does computer programming “in my spare time” and has coded in at least six languages.

“When you learn one language, it’s not that hard to learn a new one,” he said, “because there’s a lot of similarities and things you can pick up on after you learn your first one.”

SEBASTIAN JOSEPH-DAY

Sebastian Joseph-Day brings a load of experience to middle of Chargers' defense

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
March 17, 2022

Having had one of the worst run defenses in the NFL last season, the Chargers added what they believe will be 624 pounds of improvement this week.

Tackles Sebastian Joseph-Day and Austin Johnson agreed to free-agent contracts, both deals announced Wednesday when the new league year opened.

On Thursday, Joseph-Day met with the Chargers media for the first time.

Highlights from the day at the team's Costa Mesa headquarters:

A Rams redux? With the Chargers, Joseph-Day will reunite with Brandon Staley, who is now his head coach after serving as his defensive coordinator with the 2020 Rams.

Joseph-Day smiled widely — something he does often, by the way — when he recalled his first meeting with Staley. At the time, Joseph-Day was a relative unknown having not played during his first season in the NFL before starting 15 games in 2019.

The Rams' defensive front that season also had included, among others, Aaron Donald, Michael Brockers and Dante Fowler. Still, when he introduced himself to Staley, Joseph-Day said Staley told him, "I know who you are."

Staley then proceeded to praise Joseph-Day and tout him as someone on the verge of breaking through.

"Hearing that as a young player," Joseph-Day said, "that gave me a different kind of confidence."

Under Staley, Joseph-Day started all 16 games in 2020 and totaled career highs in tackles (55) and snaps (481). He was on his way to an even better season last year before suffering a pectoral injury in late October.

The defense rushes in: During the 2020 season, Joseph-Day had his best grades against the run and overall, according to Pro Football Focus. Last season, he was showing an improved pass rush — with a single-season best three sacks in only seven games — before getting hurt.

But he and Johnson were acquired to — first and foremost — upgrade the Chargers' run defense. Both players arrive with reputations as stout stuffers up front who have performed with some consistency.

Joseph-Day said that, along with being "strong" and "powerful at the point" and "heavy handed," in order to play the position well in Staley's scheme "you have to be intelligent, be able to read what you see, read formations ... stuff like that."

He said the lasting lesson from his previous experience under Staley was the importance of film study.

A year ago, in their first season running Staley's system, the Chargers struggled early on grasping and executing concepts. Joseph-Day will have no such issues when he joins his new teammates on the field.

Where does Tillery stand? Barring anything unforeseen, the defensive line in 2022 will include Jerry Tillery in some role. But Staley has indicated the Chargers aren't done adding help up front, so the circumstances remain unsettled.

On Thursday afternoon, they re-signed veteran defensive tackle Christian Covington, who had a career-high 52 tackles in 16 games as a rotational player last season.

The Chargers appear to be at least one defensive lineman short, with both Justin Jones and Linval Joseph free agents.

Tillery, a first-round pick in 2019, started 15 games last season and has 26 starts over the last two years. He has had his moments but overall has not distinguished himself. Tillery especially has lacked the sort of consistency NFL teams crave.

The intangibles: On Wednesday, Staley noted that Joseph-Day will bring a "spirit" that he said the Chargers lacked on defense in 2021. In his session with reporters, Joseph-Day practically oozed personality.

Asked specifically about the spirit to which Staley referred, Joseph-Day said: "I can't really explain it. It's just me being myself. I'm just a happy guy. I appreciate each day. ... You'll have to see, honestly. I can't really describe it."

About more than football: Joseph-Day called switching from one L.A. team to the other "a perfect mesh" since the transition will allow him to continue his off-field interests.

He is extensively involved in several charities and started a program called "Dine N Bash" that highlights and assists local restaurants. Joseph-Day also co-hosts a podcast with Mike Tyson.

"I obviously take pride in playing football and what-not," he said. "But I don't try to box myself in as that."

One more to go: Cornerback J.C. Jackson, the Chargers' biggest-ticket free agent, is scheduled to meet with reports Friday morning. He was undergoing his physical Thursday.

Jackson has agreed to terms on a five-year deal that guarantees him \$40 million and is worth up to \$82.5 million. That average annual value of \$16.5 million is tied for the fourth-highest among all free agents this year.

KHALIL MACK

How Khalil Mack's family helped him annihilate his 'soft' reputation

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
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FORT PIERCE, Fla. — He could see the potential in all that mass and all those muscles, the physical promises so pronounced that the kid's high school coach begged his father to let him play.

Robert Wimberly knew Khalil Mack could fit in at Liberty University right away and maybe, if things went well, with two more years of development be ready for a larger football program.

Then a Liberty assistant, Wimberly was the only college coach who showed interest in Mack, a prospect left on the periphery because of a high school career that covered a single season.

The staff at Florida said Mack couldn't play in the Southeastern Conference. Miami's coaches expressed similar doubts about his Atlantic Coast Conference chances. Others questioned whether Mack was explosive enough or flexible enough.

A sport that values so highly what it can see on tape lacked sufficient evidence — just 12 games? — on Mack.

But Wimberly had seen enough of his 140 stops during that one fall at Westwood High to appreciate that, as a linebacker, he played with something all defensive coaches believe they can build upon: a solid base.

What Wimberly didn't realize until he sat down with Mack one night for dinner — along with Mack's parents and two brothers — was how impressive the kid's foundation was, as well.

"It was almost like the Huxtables, you know, on the 'The Cosby Show,' " Wimberly recalled. "There was sincere love among them. Everyone was genuinely excited for Khalil. Just a lot of love and respect in that household."

When the Chargers aimed to rebuild their defense this offseason, the first move was to trade for Mack, who came from Chicago in mid-March at the cost of two draft picks — a second-round selection in 2022 and a sixth-round selection in 2023.

With Mack now 31 and trying to rebound from a season in which he missed 10 games because of a foot injury, it is fair to wonder where the sixth-time Pro Bowl pick is heading.

But there can be no questioning where Mack came from, a former two-star recruit reared in a five-star home that as recently as last year gained even more glow.

"It's just all the grace of God," Mack's father, Sandy, said. "This couldn't be orchestrated. You couldn't write this. We don't take any credit for what God has done. That would be robbery."

The name "Khalil" came from one of Sandy's muscle magazines and proved prophetic when the baby boy debuted at nearly 11 pounds and with definition in his arms, legs and everywhere else.

This was a toddler with traps. Doctors were so concerned about Mack's size that they had him tested for diabetes.

"He came out with quads," Sandy said. "Big shoulders. Big legs. Right away I thought, 'This boy's different.' "

Sandy and his wife, Yolanda, were high school sweethearts at Fort Pierce's Central High. They were married in the cafeteria of another school nearby, Lincoln Park Academy, where Yolanda's mother worked.

Having lost his father at an early age, Sandy never had the chance to play high school sports despite his own muscular, athletic frame. He and twin brother Sammie Jr. had to work instead.

"Mom told us," Sandy explained, " 'You can either play sports or you can eat.' "

As an adult, he became a corrections officer at the St. Lucie County Jail, and, concerned with protecting himself, Sandy began working out at a local gym. He and Sammie Jr. soon were battling to see who could get bigger.

That's the way it was with these twins, who competed against each other with the intensity of worst enemies or best friends.

And that's also how it was for Sandy's three sons — Sandy Jr., Khalil and Ledarius. As the oldest brother, Sandy Jr. loved challenging Khalil, the quietest of the Mack boys. So did Dad.

Years later and still today, observers marvel at Mack's ability to go from talking soft to hitting hard in the time it takes to stride across the white lines that define a football field.

"Between Sandy Jr. and I, we used to put it on him pretty good," Sandy, 57, said. "Khalil got it from both of us. You better throw a switch in that situation because crying's not going to work."

He took it, but Mack also gave it back. Sandy recalled more than once having to halt a backyard basketball game to remind Mack that Dad had to go to work in the morning and he'd prefer to do so without multiple bruises. Yolanda's half of the family is where the quiet comes from. Mack loved spending time with his maternal grandfather, Alfred Booker, the two bonding after Booker would pick him up from school.

"He has a personality like my dad — real laid back, no worries," Yolanda said. "Khalil is just Khalil, you know. He was kind of a homebody."

"Boring and focused" is how Mack has described himself when he was growing up, those qualities leading some people around the family to question his toughness. The doubters included a cousin who used to call Mack "soft."

The fact he wasn't especially drawn to football added to the notion that a kid who would become a three-time NFL All-Pro and quarterback terrorizer somehow lacked sufficient aggression.

"He just never really wanted to play the sport," Sandy said. "But I'd tell people all the time, 'If I get him off this leash, you'll see.' "

When he was 12, Mack decided to give organized football a shot. First, though, he and his father had a discussion.

"I sat him down and told him, 'OK, these guys are saying you're soft,' " Sandy remembered. " 'The first guy you hit out there, I don't want him to get up.' That was my little pep talk."

To understand how things went from there, it's not inaccurate to report that Mack put the pop in Pop Warner. Early in his first game, Sandy recalled, Mack caused a violent collision near the sidelines after appearing only as a blur.

"I didn't even know it was Khalil," Sandy said. "People were saying, 'Mack, that's your son!' I was like, 'Yeah!' While I was celebrating, I didn't see the paramedics coming to get the other guy. I didn't know Khalil was going to do it for real. The kid had to go to the hospital. I felt kind of guilty about that."

Still, Mack, more interested in basketball, wouldn't play football again until late in high school, during the spring before his senior year. By then, a torn patella tendon had sidetracked his hoops plans and, while rehabbing from the injury, Mack had thrown himself into weight lifting, first asking to join his father at the gym and later insisting on it.

At the time, Sandy had concerns about his son's academic standing, particularly Mack's struggles with math. Admitting he hadn't been a great student, Sandy said he understood the difficulties in falling behind in school.

Sandy also had worked at a juvenile detention center and was aware of the dangers that lurked for teenagers, especially outside a structured life. He figured the military might be Khalil's best chance to get out of Fort Pierce.

But one day at work, Sandy's phone rang and it was Westwood High's new coach, a man named Waides Ashmon, who had just pulled Mack out of class to talk to him about playing football again. Mack's response: "You need to talk to my dad."

"I called and said, 'Mr. Mack, I've been doing this a long time,' " Ashmon said. " 'I've never guaranteed a parent that their kid's gonna go to school. But if you allow Khalil to play for me, I promise you he'll go to school free.' "

Ashmon was so certain of Mack's potential that he made the assurance even after glimpsing Mack only in a collared shirt and shorts. He figured that physique alone would be too enticing to college coaches.

The conversation — and enclosed guarantee of a continued, free education — convinced Sandy, who agreed by the end of the call to allow his son to return to football.

With that decision, Mack went into full pursuit, this player who later would become famous for his ability to chase down quarterbacks.

In one of his first practices that spring, Mack proved he could do more than just look as if he belonged. With Yolanda waiting in the parking lot to take her son to a class at a nearby community college, Westwood's coaches told Mack to go first during a tackling drill.

"Khalil beat the block and smacked the running back and it was like, 'Oh, you're done. Go to class, kid,'" said Jabari Williams, then a Westwood assistant. "It took just one hit. After that, we knew we had ourselves something."

Yet, Mack was regarded as only the third-best prospect on a team that would finish 10-2. Defensive lineman Luther Robinson, who went to Miami and eventually to the Green Bay Packers, and quarterback Isaac Virgin, who played at South Florida as a tight end, were ranked ahead of him.

As much as the Westwood staff promoted Mack — Williams: "We were begging schools to take him." — the pleas went unheard.

"I was like, 'What are y'all ... we can't be watching the same film,'" Ashmon said. "But I also knew Khalil's work ethic and how with college coaching he would get a lot better."

Mack's lone offer came from Liberty, which is where he was headed until Wimberly left to take a job at Buffalo. Mack followed him, receiving the full-ride Ashmon had promised Sandy.

That summer and into training camp, Wimberly remembers the Bulls' coaches debating about whether to play Mack or redshirt him. Asked his opinion, Wimberly sided with redshirting, noting that Mack, with more experience, could be "super special."

Buffalo did redshirt him, slowing the start of Mack's college career but hardly the beginning of his rapid growth. Actually playing wasn't a requirement to show he could make plays.

One day, a reporter from upstate New York called Sandy with a question:

"Mr. Mack, do you know what your son is up here doing?"

"No. No I don't."

"Your son's doing some things we've never seen before."

"Really?"

"Mr. Mack, I think your son is going to be something real special here at Buffalo."

Wrecking practices, that's what Mack was doing, to the point where Wimberly said he was asked more than once by a fellow Buffalo assistant, "Wimbo, can you talk to him, please?"

Mack was leaving impressions — the black-and-blue kind, and others much more permanent.

Sandy took another call from Buffalo one afternoon. This time, it was an assistant coach telling him his son was doing something the coach had never seen before: Mack was cleaning the locker room.

When his boys were young, Sandy would bring them along anytime he would do volunteer work in and around Fort Pierce. "Because it's just the right thing to do," he said he'd tell them if they asked why they had to go.

Today, Mack is widely recognized for giving back. His foundation made a \$500,000 donation to a Fort Pierce park that now includes a football field bearing Mack's name.

Westwood needed football uniforms a few years back and, the school's athletic director said, Sandy wrote a \$20,000 check. Just a couple weeks ago, a box full of several pairs of cleats showed up unannounced at Westwood, compliments of Mack, who also has done things such as pay off all the layaway bills at the local Walmart around Christmastime.

"It's a family thing," Ashmon said. "Khalil's mimicking his dad. His dad was giving back way before Khalil became Khalil."

After he signed his first NFL contract, Mack bought his parents a home in nearby Vero Beach. He also paid off his dad's truck.

The BMW and Mercedes in the driveway of that Vero Beach house came from Mack, who has rewarded some of the younger members of the extended household with cars in exchange for maintaining their grades.

This is a family anchored in its faith and its church, Sandy and Yolanda both deacons at the Miracle Prayer Temple Worship Center. They all love music and have been part of the church band. Sandy has written and recorded gospel songs.

Mack can sing, too, and also taught himself to play the guitar while in college. Sandy thought he was the best piano player in the family until Ledarius came along.

As the church's music director, Sandy would arrange songs so that the Macks could sing four-part harmony. They still can do it, on cue, which happened recently when the boys were back together.

So, when that Buffalo assistant called with the news that Mack was picking up his teammates' trash, Sandy said the words came wrapped in reassurance.

"That made me feel like, 'Wow, he got it,'" Sandy said. "For me to get a call from somebody way up in Buffalo to tell me that made me think Khalil's going to be OK."

OK, plus plenty more. With the Bulls, Mack would develop into a freakish force — one capable of lifting offensive linemen off the ground one-handed — and easily the greatest player in program history.

As a senior, he had 2½ sacks, nine tackles and an interception for touchdown against Ohio State in the game that cemented Mack's status as an NFL prospect and a Bulls legend.

"Buffalo plays in the MAC," Sandy said. "It can't be coincidence that that happened. I told him, 'Khalil, they're spelling Mack wrong. Make sure they know how to spell Mack before you leave.' And that's what he did."

(Five years after Khalil left Buffalo, Ledarius joined the Bulls' football program for two seasons. He debuted in the NFL last year, appearing in three games for the Bears. How rich is the athletic DNA in this family? Ledarius attended a high school — Lincoln Park Academy — that didn't have a football team and then went to a small college in Miami to play basketball before giving football a try.)

The story goes that in the lead-up to that 2013 season opener in Columbus, then-Buckeyes coach Urban Meyer was talking about Mack when, suddenly forgetting his name, referred to him as "No. 46."

After Ohio State's 40-20 victory, Mack approached Meyer, extended his right hand and introduced himself.

Longtime coach Lou Tepper was Buffalo's defensive coordinator during that time. He spent nearly a half-century in football and literally wrote the book on linebacker play, putting Mack on the cover of the second edition of "Complete Linebacking."

To grasp the totality of Mack's impact, though, consider that Tepper, to this day, texts Mack a Bible verse every Saturday morning and speaks of him with a reverence rooted in nothing having to do with football.

"I love him," Tepper said, "and if he had never played a down in the NFL, if he had never been drafted, I wouldn't love him any differently."

So what's left? Just this: Remember that line about the five-star home gaining more glow? In June of 2021, Sandy and Yolanda heard from a man named Jalen Parmele, who, using one of those ancestry programs, discovered he was a Mack boy, as well. The original Mack boy.

Sandy and Yolanda had a son before Sandy Jr. arrived. At the time, they both thought they were too young to properly handle the responsibility, so they put the baby up for adoption.

Parmele grew up in Michigan to be a football player and made the NFL, a running back who spent parts of five seasons with Baltimore, Jacksonville and Arizona.

A month after Parmele reached out to the Macks, everyone reunited in Florida for a genuine Sunshine State celebration. They filled in the gaps of their life stories and shot selfies, embracing a previously unknown family chapter.

Sandy smiled when he pointed out that Parmele played in college at Toledo, which is in the same conference as Buffalo. That's right, another Mack in the MAC.

"I'm telling you, you couldn't orchestrate this," Sandy said. "No way. This was orchestrated at a higher level."

How the Bears and Chargers became perfect trade partners for Khalil Mack

By Daniel Popper & Kevin Fishbain
The Athletic
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The Chargers introduced Brandon Staley as their new head coach on Jan. 21, 2021. Speaking to reporters on a video call from the team's facility in Orange County, Staley knew a long process awaited.

Roster turnover is a painstaking, meticulous process. Staley was inheriting a talented collection of players, led by emerging superstar quarterback Justin Herbert. He had a clear vision of where he wanted to go and what he needed to get there. But it was going to take time and patience.

"You know that you got to do things in a sequence," Staley said earlier this month. "It's not college, where you can recruit and turn things over and just have everything at once."

That sequence had to begin with creating the best possible structure for Herbert, from the coaching staff down to the supporting cast of players. So in that first offseason, Staley and general manager Tom Telesco invested in that structure — step one in what Staley has referred to as a "two-year vision." The offensive line was a mess. They bolstered that group through free agency and the draft. They added weapons and a veteran backup quarterback in Chase Daniel, who was familiar with new offensive coordinator Joe Lombardi's scheme from their time together in New Orleans.

The structure they built worked. Herbert excelled. The Chargers had a top-five offense. But they missed the playoffs, primarily because Staley's defense did not coalesce or perform as expected.

And that brings us to the second step in Staley's roster-turnover plan. This offseason was always going to be the time to overhaul the defense and rebuild that side of the ball with players that truly fit Staley's vision.

They needed playmakers. They needed more elite talent that could help take Staley's system — a system that, with the right players, proved to be one of the best and most innovative in football with the Rams in 2020 — and make it come alive on the field.

There was a player who could be available via trade, the type of edge rusher who the Chargers felt could improve all of the defense's weaknesses and provide the pedigree, standard of performance and mentality that could reshape the unit's identity: Khalil Mack.

Meanwhile in Chicago, Ryan Poles took over a franchise that had gone from 12-4 with the best defense in football — led by Mack — in 2018 to 6-11 last season, firing both general manager Ryan Pace and head coach Matt Nagy.

The Bears' roster is nowhere near Super Bowl-caliber, and as Poles hopes the Bears have a quarterback in Justin Fields to build around like the Chargers do in Herbert, the process of doing so required tough decisions, such as potentially moving the highest-paid player in franchise history.

Teams had begun to inquire, and the more calls Poles received, the more the 37-year-old, first-time GM realized that trading Mack was a possibility. It would signal the start of a roster makeover and could get the Bears some badly needed draft capital.

Mack had arguably the best season of his career with the Bears in 2018 when Staley was his position coach under then-defensive coordinator Vic Fangio. Staley was determined to push for Mack. Telesco, who has always listened to his head coaches and tried to provide them with the tools they need, was on board. With Herbert on a rookie deal and a championship window clearly open, owner Dean Spanos and president of football operations John Spanos were in lockstep with their coach and general manager.

"It showed the alignment of our organization, starting with Dean and John Spanos, starting with the Spanos family," Staley said. "Because that's where it begins: with leadership."

A similar sense of agreement was taking place in Chicago.

"There was buy-in from (head coach) Matt (Eberflus), from ownership, from everyone," Poles said. "They understood that it was the right move at the right time."

The Chargers possessed the cap space to take on Mack's initial \$17.75 million cap hit. But they were not going to overpay in draft capital. It is doubtful the Chargers would have made the deal if the Bears and Poles had demanded a first-round pick in return. But a 2022 second-round pick? That was a sweet spot.

"Any time that you're going to get involved in a move like that, there are very few players that you're going to do that for," Staley said. "That list is not very long, and so when you assess, OK, this player — doesn't matter what position — hey, this is what we think that he's worth. The Khalil trade, that's representative of that. We feel like that was really good value for a player of his caliber."

The final price: A 2022 second-round pick and a 2023 sixth-round pick.

"We made a trade that we felt like really added a premium player to our team, but without it mortgaging our future," Staley said.

Poles' familiarity with the star pass rusher came predominantly when the two were both in the AFC West — Poles in the personnel department with the Chiefs and Mack as an NFL Defensive Player of the Year with the Raiders.

He'd have to have a tough conversation with a player he never acquired in the first place — part of the gig for a new GM.

Poles didn't necessarily owe Mack anything, but he understood the magnitude of the trade and what Mack meant to the Bears.

When it became time to make a trade, Poles called Mack to tell him that he wanted to put the player in a good situation. Poles considered everything about the situation he'd send Mack to, including how a warm-weather team would benefit the 31-year old at this time in his career.

"The big thing was just letting him know how much the organization appreciated him, how much I appreciated his career," Poles said. "I think the world of him. But also to let him know that it's best for the club that we go in different directions. But I took the time to let him know that I was going to make sure that he was going to be put in a situation that was going to be good for him, where he could compete."

Poles probably wasn't going to get pushback from Mack, who moves from a team in transition with a new coaching staff to a team with Super Bowl aspirations in Los Angeles for his former position coach. Trading for Mack was a seminal moment for the Bears in the past decade, but moving him signaled a change, and that might have been a tough decision for George McCaskey to give the OK.

In the new power structure at Halas Hall, Poles reports directly to the team's chairman, and McCaskey is nothing if not a die-hard Bears fan.

"Well, Khalil is a great player," McCaskey said. "And showed on many occasions for us how he can take over a game, so when you have a player like that, you want to have a good discussion. (Poles) explained to me the reasons why he thought the Bears should do it and it made sense to me."

Trading the highest-paid player in Bears history wasn't an easy decision for new head coach Matt Eberflus, left, and general manager Ryan Poles. (Nam Y. Huh / Associated Press)

Another important person in the organization who might have had to be sold? Eberflus. Imagine being a new head coach, one with a defensive background, and getting the opportunity to work with a player like Mack, only to see him traded less than two months into the job. But Eberflus understands the business, and what Poles is trying to build.

"Yeah I mean, Khalil has had a great career," Eberflus said. "He's going to continue to do well and do a lot of good things in the future. But we just thought what was best for the organization going forward, looking at the whole piece of it, you know, the contract, looking at everything. Going forward for us, the club, it was the best move for us. We all signed off on it. It will be good for us in the long run."

Poles had everyone on the same page, but he still called the move one of the hardest moments of his first two months on the job.

This wasn't just any trade, and Poles didn't treat it that way, starting with his call to Mack.

"I wasn't going to send him somewhere that he wasn't happy," Poles said. "I wanted to make sure he knew that I cared and I wanted to put him in a good situation. I think he really appreciated that. I know the agent appreciated that. It's really ... I think a win-win for Khalil, the Chargers and the Bears in terms of the direction that we're all going. (But) that was a hard thing to do to move on from a guy like that."

Mack was at home watching the new Peacock drama “Bel-Air” — a re-imagining of Will Smith’s classic ‘90s sitcom “The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air” — with his fiancée, rapper and actress Brianna Perry, and his infant son, Deuce, when his phone rang.

It was his agent, Joel Segal, and there was some news to share.

Like the main character in the show, Mack would be making an unexpected move to Los Angeles.

“Kind of a strange coincidence,” Mack said.

The Chargers had traded for him, and Mack would be reuniting with Staley.

Mack said he went through a range of emotions after hearing the news. But he settled on a positive note because of that familiarity with Staley.

“It was weird to hear,” Mack said of his initial thoughts. “But understanding the team and the coach, having a relationship with Coach Staley and knowing his mindset and knowing his passion for the game, it went from bittersweet to kind of excited; knowing who I’m dealing with — the type of man he is, first and foremost — and how much he truly loves the game of football. You can feel it whenever you speak to him.”

Staley did not have to ride the same emotional roller coaster.

The negotiations had progressed quickly. Staley said Telesco and Poles first connected around the NFL combine in early March. After the two sides agreed to terms on March 10, Telesco walked to Staley’s office and told his head coach that the trade was happening.

The only feeling for Staley: Elation.

“Tom came down to my office and (was) pretty casual,” Staley said. “He acted like he’d been there before.”

Telesco, though, had not been here before. In his previous nine years as general manager, Telesco had traded picks for a player only twice — a conditional seventh-round pick for defensive tackle Sean Lissemore in 2013 and a conditional seventh-round pick for quarterback Cardale Jones in 2017.

This was new territory for the organization. And it is evidence, more than anything else, of where the Chargers stand entering 2022.

They traded for Mack. They signed the top cornerback on the market in J.C. Jackson.

The time to win is now.

“You partner up with a GM who believes in what you do, and you have a vision for how you’re going to build a team and what you need,” Staley said. “And so it was just exciting to see it all come together.”

Based on Poles’ moves and focus on the long-term view, it’s evident how he evaluated this roster. But he said he didn’t take the job thinking, “I’m going to trade Khalil Mack.” The volume of calls made it a reality.

The move, however, tracks with his plan. That’s not to say it will ultimately prove to be the right plan or the correct approach — a lot of that will depend on Fields and how the Bears use their draft picks, then what they do with their extra resources in 2023 — but moving a player like Mack to get a second-round pick signaled the start of the strategy.

“To me, it kind of just kicked it off in terms of executing our plan to be successful and to get this roster to where it needs to be,” Poles said. “But it was definitely mixed emotions because it’s a guy who’s a good football player. I know what he’s meant to this organization. I remember that night game when he first got to Chicago, it was incredible.

“That’s a tough player to move on from, but again, when you know what you need to do for the betterment of the club, it was like, let’s go, the clock has started. We’ve got to move and do what we can to improve the roster.”

Poles said they took a look at analytics, Mack’s age, his playing time, and then the timing element — when could they get the best compensation for Mack?

“If you wait, what does that look like? If you do it now, what does it look like?” Poles said. “And we just thought, right now it would allow the Bears to have more ammunition to add more players.”

From his first day at Halas Hall, Poles noted the low number of draft picks the Bears had in 2022 — only five, in part because of the Fields trade. That’s a difficult foundation for a GM who wants to infuse the roster with young talent and ultimately try to build through the draft.

The Mack trade might have added only one more pick to the 2022 Bears haul, but it’s a significant one, as it’s in the top 50.

“It was just looking at our future,” Poles said. “It was looking at where we needed to go. Again, the (number of) picks were low. And like I mentioned, using the different tools, analytics, everything, it just seemed like the right time to do it in terms of value where we can help this team out now and in the future.”

Mack has still been a dominant player ... when healthy. That durability question mark, his age and his cap hit are all going to be viewed through the prism of the team’s direction. While the Chargers believe they acquired someone who gets them closer to a Super Bowl, the Bears believe this move gets them closer to where they want to be as well with the extra draft picks and cap flexibility for a franchise that was not going to contend in 2022.

Staley is a defensive coach. Yet the priority in his first head-coaching gig was elevating Herbert and ensuring his continued growth and development.

“We had to get that right,” Staley, who played quarterback in college, said in January.

That started with protection. The Chargers signed three starters in free agency — All-Pro center Corey Linsley and guards Matt Feiler and Oday Aboushi — and drafted a franchise left tackle in the first round in Rashawn Slater. They added two more offensive players in the top 100 of the draft in wide receiver Joshua Palmer and tight end Tre’ McKitty. They signed tight end Jared Cook, who also played under Lombardi with the Saints, and Daniel. The Chargers hired Lombardi from the Saints, where he was Sean Payton’s longtime quarterbacks coach, and he brought a version of that New Orleans passing offense to Los Angeles.

The vision for the structure around Herbert turned into production. The Chargers finished fourth in both TruMedia’s offensive EPA/play and Football Outsiders’ offensive DVOA. Herbert passed for more than 5,000 yards and finished third in the league in QBR.

The defense, though, struggled.

The Chargers had one of the worst defenses in football in 2021. They finished 28th in EPA/play and 26th in DVOA. They could not stop the run consistently. They could not get off the field on third down. They did not generate enough pressure on the quarterback. They did not force enough turnovers.

Their Week 18 loss to the Raiders provided the final evidence that the Chargers needed to shore up their defense in 2022. (Stephen R. Sylvania / USA Today)

The Chargers had built an offense for Herbert. Now they needed a defense that could take some of the pressure off his shoulders. Herbert can keep the Chargers in games almost single-handedly. He put together one of the most remarkable comebacks in recent NFL history in Week 18 against the Raiders in Las Vegas with a heroic three-drive stretch in the fourth quarter and overtime of that season-ending loss. Herbert is capable of doing those things, but that does not mean the Chargers want to live in that world.

“It’s not just enough to outscore people in this league, because there’s going to be a game where you don’t shoot it well, and you’ve got to win in a lot of different ways in this league,” Staley said. “When you have a quarterback, it’s not just surrounding him with offensive weapons. It’s surrounding him with a complete team where the pressure isn’t on him every single game to score 35, to throw for 350, to bring you back. And I think that’s what we’re trying to do.”

The Chargers had several key defensive players hitting free agency: edge rusher Uchenna Nwosu, linebacker Kyzir White, defensive lineman Justin Jones, nickel corner Chris Harris Jr. and defensive lineman Linval Joseph. That meant a boatload of cap space and open starting positions at all three levels of the defense.

Mack was the first piece in reassembling that defensive puzzle. The team was initially interested in re-signing Nwsou as its second edge rusher opposite Joey Bosa, but then the Mack trade materialized. It was no longer financially feasible to bring back the 2018 second-round pick. Nwsou ended up signing a two-year, \$19.055 million deal with the Seahawks.

In Mack, the Chargers believe they have added a player who can affect all facets of their defense, tangible and intangible. His edge-rushing prowess is well documented. But he is also an outstanding run defender, and, along with the interior additions of Sebastian Joseph-Day and Austin Johnson, the Chargers are expecting significant improvements in that area.

“He brings a lot of the elements that our team needs right now,” Staley said. “He brings the play style that we really value, that toughness. He’s a complete player. I think that from a culture standpoint, we really wanted to have somebody join up with Derwin James up front. Derwin plays in the secondary, he’s our signal caller, but someone up front that can really maximize him.”

Mack is coming off a foot injury that limited him to seven games last season. But the Chargers are confident that he has good football left in him. Part of that confidence is embedded in Staley’s existing relationship with Mack.

When Mack was traded to the Bears in 2018, he arrived in Chicago less than a week before the season opener against the Packers. Staley, then the Bears outside linebackers coach, spent hours and hours with Mack, late into the night sometimes, teaching his new star player the complex Fangio playbook.

Staley got Mack ready to play, and Mack had a strip-sack, a fumble recovery and a pick-six — in the first half.

“I don’t think y’all understand how fast I really had to learn a whole defensive playbook,” Mack said, “and he made it easy.”

Staley now has a full offseason to integrate Mack into his Chargers defense.

“You’re not envisioning the fit or projecting the fit. You know the fit,” Staley said. “You know exactly how to use that player, so the ramp-up time is going to be very short with that guy.”

The Chargers still have 10 picks in April’s draft after trading for Mack. That additional capital made parting with the second-rounder more palatable.

“You’re trading for one of the best players in the game, and you know exactly what you’re getting,” Staley said. “The cost was very minimal for a player of his caliber. I think it was an excellent trade.”

In a month that saw Russell Wilson, Deshaun Watson, Carson Wentz, Matt Ryan, Davante Adams and Tyreek Hill change teams, the Mack trade took a back seat. It is an offense-first league, after all.

But Mack himself has become the symbol of the direction of a team in two separate offseasons.

Nearly four years ago, the Raiders moved Mack to a Bears team that saw an opportunity to win in 2018, and he led them to a 12-4 record while his former team hoped to take advantage of its extra draft picks.

Then near the start of the 2022 league year, a Chargers team that sees its Super Bowl window as right now made the move for Mack, while the Bears hope to make the best of their additional draft picks, as they are now the team in transition.

Before the 2019 draft, Pace quipped that when the Raiders were on the clock for the first-round pick they received from the Bears, the personnel department would turn on a highlight reel of Mack’s first season in Chicago. At that time, the Bears still had high expectations, and Mack was a major part of it. He had 12 1/2 sacks and six forced fumbles. He was the centerpiece of the league’s best defense.

When the Bears are on the clock at No. 48, maybe Telesco and Staley will flip on clips of Mack, and let their minds wander as to what he can mean to the 2022 Chargers. And maybe in Lake Forest, Ill., Poles will let his mind wander with that pick, and whatever he does with it, hoping it will help get the Bears to be where the Chargers are.

It’s the right move at the right time for both teams, using different roster-building strategies. But the Chargers get to reap the rewards of their side of the deal much more quickly. The Bears understand that. This is part of their plan.

Mack hears the doubters. He is aware of what he calls “the narrative” — that he has lost a step, that he is not the same player.

“Turn on the TV. You’ll hear what they’re saying,” Mack said. “And it’s like, OK, bet. You know what I mean? I’ll bet on myself any day.”

The Chargers bet on him, too. This is their big swing. And if the Chargers want to win a Lombardi Trophy in the 2022 season, then all parties involved — from Mack, to Staley, to Telesco, to the Spanos family — need those bets to cash.

“If people are saying that, then they certainly don’t know him. At all,” Staley said. “And if they are saying that, then good luck to them. Because you’ll see. You’ll see.”

New Chargers defender Mack happy to be reunited with Staley

By Joe Reedy
Associated Press
March 16, 2022

COSTA MESA, Calif. (AP) — Khalil Mack was watching the television show “Bel-Air” with his fiancée and son last Thursday when he got a call from his agent that the Chicago Bears were trading him. In a strange coincidence, Mack’s new team is close to the real Bel Air.

Mack met with reporters on Wednesday after his trade to the Los Angeles Chargers became official with the start of the new league year. The Chargers sent a second-round pick this year and a 2023 sixth-round selection to the Bears for one of the league’s top pass rushers and a three-time All-Pro defender.

“It was weird to hear, but having a relationship with coach (Brandon) Staley, it went from bittersweet to excited, knowing who I’m dealing with and how much he truly loves football,” Mack said.

Staley was Mack’s linebacker coach when the Bears acquired Mack from the Raiders during the 2018 preseason. Staley was in Chicago for only one season before going to Denver when Vic Fangio was hired as Broncos coach.

Staley is hoping this reunion with Mack lasts longer.

“I’m excited for him to be around our team and build a team with him (on the roster),” Staley said. “It was an amazing year in Chicago, but that didn’t last long enough. To be able to do it again is very special, and I’m excited about it for sure.”

Mack, who turned 31 on Feb. 22, will be going into his ninth NFL season. He was the fifth overall pick by the Raiders in the 2014 draft and was The Associated Press Defensive Player of the Year in 2016. He was traded to the Bears after a contract dispute.

Chicago opted to clean house after going 6-11 last season. It fired general manager Ryan Pace and coach Matt Nagy — who were both instrumental in acquiring Mack — replacing them with Ryan Poles and Matt Eberflus.

Mack got off to a good start last season with six sacks in seven games before being placed on season-ending injured reserve in November and undergoing foot surgery.

Mack said he didn’t hear from Poles until after his agent, Joel Segal, informed him about the trade. Mack did acknowledge the possibility of being traded entered his mind.

Staley said conversations might have started during the NFL scouting combine two weeks ago and that the deal came together quickly after that.

“The cost was very minimum for a player of his caliber. I think it was excellent,” Staley said. “We know everything about this guy. and what he’s bringing to your team. And, you know, vice versa.”

The Chargers get an established playmaker who can not only rush the passer but effectively stops the run. Last season, Los Angeles was 9-8 but missed the playoffs with losses in three of the final four games.

Staley brought in an attacking 3-4 scheme that made the Rams the top-ranked unit in 2020, but he didn't get the same results with the Chargers, who were 23rd in total defense and third worst against the run.

The 138.9 yards per game allowed on the ground were the worst by a Chargers defense since 2003.

Mack is the first move in an overhaul of the defense. Los Angeles has also added cornerback J.C. Jackson and defensive linemen Sebastian Jones-Day and Austin Johnson.

"He brings the playmaking ability and style of play that we believe in," said Staley about Mack. "I don't think we had enough of that last year, not even close. He's a dominant, complete defender."

Mack will be paired with Joey Bosa to form one of the AFC's top pass-rushing duos, which is critical in a division with Kansas City's Patrick Mahomes, Denver's Russell Wilson, and Las Vegas' Derek Carr facing LA twice a year.

"I've been watching Joey from afar since his rookie year. And that guy has been flying off the ball," Mack said. "It's special to see him. I could keep going on and on about this guy. It's understanding what we're going to do. It's a big picture. I just can't wait."

Los Angeles also announced Wednesday it agreed to a contract with long snapper Josh Harris.

Chargers coach Brandon Staley, linebacker Khalil Mack were a dynamic duo before

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
March 17, 2022

The remaking of the Chargers defense took its most tangible step forward yet Wednesday when Khalil Mack was introduced at a news conference.

The Chargers traded last week for the three-time All-Pro edge rusher, bringing him in to help upgrade a unit that was the team's shortcoming last season. They also signed three young veteran defenders in free agency: cornerback J.C. Jackson and interior linemen Sebastian Joseph-Day and Austin Johnson. That trio will speak over the next two days.

Mack was first to go. Here are the highlights of the day from the Chargers' Costa Mesa training facility:

Hard-hitter in more ways than one: The Chargers are looking for Mack to make an impact that can be accurately described as profound. Head coach Brandon Staley has seen it before.

Staley was coaching the outside linebackers in Chicago when the Bears acquired Mack from Oakland just before the start of the 2018 season.

"When he got to Chicago, our entire team changed," Staley said. "We were a top-10 defense. ... When he got there, we became the No. 1 defense. We had a good defense. When he came, we became the best defense."

Staley explained that Mack will affect the Chargers both on and off the field, saying he can change cultures as much as he can games "because of who he is on a day-to-day basis."

"He's not one of these guys that's going to tell you something," Staley said. "He's going to show you. And you feel that right away."

Indeed, Mack called himself "an action guy" and "not a talker." Staley suggested the Chargers' lacked enough of that type of presence on defense last season. It was notable that Staley also referenced his desire to pair Mack with safety Derwin James Jr., the widely acknowledged heart of the defense. This is a partnership upon which the Chargers will lean in 2022.

Sacks and a whole lot more: On the field, Staley said Mack's impact should be easy to spot. He talked about his consistency, durability and toughness.

"He also brings a style of play that we really believe in," Staley said. "I don't think we had enough of it [in 2021]. Not even close."

The Chargers struggled last season particularly against the run and on third down. They gave up an average of 138.9 yards on the ground, one the worst single-season performances in franchise history. Their season — and playoff chances — ended in the most fitting of ways when they failed to prevent Las Vegas from converting on a third-down run in overtime in Week 18 and lost on the field goal that followed.

Staley said Mack's 76.5 career sacks tell only part of story of how Mack impacts offenses, which is especially important for the Chargers. "Complete defender because he can do everything," Staley said. "He can dominate the edge in the run game, which is where it starts. He's athletic on his feet to be able to run and catch anybody."

Staley explained that the ability of edge rushers to move is vital in today's NFL with "the ball on the perimeter as much as it is." This was another area where the 2021 Chargers no doubt lacked.

A player-coach reunion: Mack almost certainly wouldn't be a Charger without Staley also being here. Their relationship is rooted in the long hours they spent together after Mack joined the Bears in early September 2018. Following the trade, Mack had barely a week to prepare for Chicago's opener against Green Bay.

"He made it easy," Mack said. "You could see his passion through it, understanding he knew how much I wanted to get out there for that first game, and we were able to do it."

Against the Packers, Mack had a sack, a forced fumble, a fumble recovery and an interception, one he returned 27 yards for a touchdown. How's that for instant impact? The time together for Mack and Staley was brief, Staley leaving after the '18 season to join Vic Fangio's staff in Denver. "It was bittersweet in Chicago," Staley said. "It was an amazing year. All these great things are happening. But then it was like, 'Man, that didn't last long enough.' To be able to go do it again, is very special."

Healthy and motivated: Mack said his surgically repaired foot is "100%, good to go, whatever you want to hear." He missed the final 10 games last season after being injured in late October. Before going down, Mack had six sacks, which represented a single-season career-best pace. He hasn't reached double figures in sacks since that '18 season when he finished with 12½.

Mack, 31, suggested he has heard rumblings about his fading production. He dismissed the notion by saying, "I'll bet on myself any day."

"If people are saying that, then they certainly don't know him at all," Staley said. "And if they are saying that, then good luck to them. Because you'll see. You'll see."

Added Mack: "It's going to be fun. I know ya'll going to enjoy watching it for sure."

More defensive help on the way: The roster rebuild will continue, Staley saying the work is far from complete.

Even with the addition of Jackson, he said the search for defensive backs won't stop. As for the defensive front, Staley said there would be more to come. "We're much closer to where we need to be," he said. "We're not there yet. But we're much closer. ... It's about depth in this league."

Specialist added: The Chargers signed long snapper Josh Harris to a contract that guarantees him \$1.92 million. He spent the last 10 seasons with Atlanta and made the Pro Bowl in 2021.

Khalil Mack joins Chargers looking to change narrative

By Gilbert Manzano
Orange County Register
March 16, 2022

COSTA MESA — Khalil Mack remembered the whirlwind week he had the first time he got traded when he found himself trying to put his emotions at ease after his agent broke the news that he was on the move again.

Brandon Staley was by Mack's side when he had to learn the Chicago Bears' complex defense within a week of facing the Green Bay Packers for the 2018 season opener.

"Went from bittersweet to excited," Mack said about his initial reaction to being traded from the Bears to the Chargers and reuniting with Staley, his new head coach and former outside linebackers coach in Chicago.

Mack had an idea this might happen again after the Bears hired a new coach and general manager during the offseason, but he was still surprised when his agent Joel Segal called last week while watching "Bel-Air."

"We were watching 'Bel-Air' when Joel called, which was kind of a strange coincidence," Mack said Wednesday at his Chargers introductory news conference. "But it was weird to hear. It was weird to hear, but understanding the team and the coach."

Mack, the six-time Pro Bowl edge rusher, was reserved and brief with his responses when asked about playing with a star-studded Chargers defense that includes Joey Bosa, Derwin James and fellow newcomer J.C. Jackson. For those who don't know Mack from his Oakland Raiders days or his time with Chicago, that's a good sign for his current team.

The less Mack says, the more he wants to prove on the field. Staley described him as quiet, but fierce. "That's the easy part to talk about that, right?" Mack said when asked about his new Chargers teammates. "But I'm an action guy. That's what I'm looking forward to, it's putting in the work."

Ironically, "Bel-Air" (the remake of the 1990s Will Smith sitcom "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air") is a show about a teenager from the other side of the country looking for a fresh start in one of Los Angeles' richest neighborhoods. But Mack has already done something similar when he was traded by the Raiders to the Chicago Bears for four draft picks, including two first-rounders.

Back then, the steep asking price seemed fair because Mack was clearly one of the game's top defenders, the other being Rams defensive lineman Aaron Donald. Four years later, the Chargers were able to land Mack without relinquishing a first-round pick, only sending a 2022 second-round pick and a 2023 sixth-round pick to Chicago.

Many were quick to crown the Chargers the winners of the trade, but others hesitated because Mack is no longer viewed in the same light as Donald. That's where Mack's short responses on Wednesday come in.

He's not a talker, but he's a listener. Mack knows there's a new narrative about him — that the 31-year-old isn't the same player. "You turn on the TV, you hear what they're saying," Mack said. "It's like, 'OK, bet.' I'll bet on myself any day. ... That's always the mindset, new team or not, understanding what the narrative is about me right now. I can't wait, I can't wait. I'm not a talker. I rather show y'all than tell you."

Staley vividly remembers the instant impact Mack made in Chicago when he arrived in early September of 2018. "When he got to Chicago, our entire team changed," Staley said. "We were a top-10 defense. When he got there, we became the best defense. It's because of who he is ... lead by example and show you."

Staley spent countless hours with Mack the week he crammed the Bears' playbook in his mind. Mack started his Bears stint with a 27-yard interception return for a touchdown against the Packers in Week 1 and guided the top-ranked Bears' defense to an NFC North title.

"That was the person I spent the most time with when I first got to Chicago," Mack said of Staley. "In the room together, going through the playbook. ... We had five, six days to prepare for the Packers. It was a quick turnaround and he was a big part of me consuming a big part of that playbook, which is complicated as well. Understanding what (then-Bears defensive coordinator) Vic Fangio likes to do."

Staley and Mack won't have to rush this time around because it's March and Staley runs a similar defense to Fangio with his two-high scheme. "There was a lot of beauty to that," Staley said about bonding with Mack during the rushed week in Chicago. Staley said the Chargers went after Mack because he'll impact the team's culture, fits the scheme and can be dominant on the field. Those were qualities the Chargers' defense lacked in Staley's first season, when the team ranked 30th in the NFL in points allowed (27 ppg) and rushing yards per game (138.9).

"We were looking for somebody who could really impact our team, first," Staley said. "That can be a real impactor in terms of the culture on our team. On defense, we're looking for playmakers. We're looking for style of play, too. And he brings both of those things. ... He brings the playmaking ability and also brings the style of play that we really believe in. I didn't think we had enough of it (last year), not even close."

"He brings what we're looking for to the table. He's a dominant, complete defender because he could do everything."

Staley now has enough playmakers with the additions of Mack, Jackson and defensive tackles Sebastian Joseph-Day and Austin Johnson. Mack had a similar supporting cast in his first season in Chicago with a loaded defense that included Akiem Hicks, Eddie Goldman, Danny Trevathan, Leonard Floyd, Roquan Smith, Kyle Fuller, Eddie Jackson, Adrian Amos, Prince Amukamara and Bryce Callahan.

Mack named all those players Thursday and thanked the Bears for taking a chance on him, but that group never reached its full potential mostly because of inconsistent play at the quarterback position. That likely won't be an issue in Southern California with Chargers star quarterback Justin Herbert.

"A little different," Mack said about this trade compared to the first one. This Chargers team might be more of a complete team and Mack has embraced the pressure of delivering better results this time around in his ninth NFL season. The three-time All-Pro also said the foot injury that forced him to miss 10 games last season won't be an issue.

"100% good to go," Mack said. "Whatever you want to hear."

Mack's arrival is the centerpiece of Staley's scheme potentially working in 2022, similar to four years ago in Chicago. But reboots are rarely as good as the original. Although, Mack seems to be a fan of the remake of the Will Smith comedy series. He's motivated to change the narrative and that's a good thing for Staley and the Chargers.

"He wants to prove himself right," Staley said. "If people are saying that, then they certainly don't know him at all, and if they are saying that, then good luck to them, because you'll see. You'll see."

KENNETH MURRAY JR.

Los Angeles Chargers' Kenneth Murray Jr. playing with heavy heart in aftermath of brother's death

By Shelley Smith
ESPN.com
October 4, 2021

COSTA MESA, Calif. -- You can hear the sadness in his voice. It's not outwardly noticeable if you didn't know to look for it, but it's there -- the kind of sadness you would never wish on anyone.

Los Angeles Chargers linebacker Kenneth Murray Jr. is a 6-foot-2, 241-pound chiseled athlete who cares passionately about the game of football. He also cares passionately about his family, especially his adopted siblings, all of whom have a chromosomal abnormality known as deletion.

His father, a Baptist minister, and his mother, a retired police officer, learned of the children from his church congregation and took them in when Murray was 11. And when their middle son, the one he was closest to, Lenny, died unexpectedly in April on what would have been his 14th birthday, Murray was devastated.

Murray had pledged to take care of the kids if something happened to his parents. But nobody expected something like this to happen to one of the children.

"One day I was doing something with football and I got a phone call and I kind of had to drop everything and jump on a flight and go through that," he said. "Since then I've just kind of stayed to myself."

He took to Twitter to process his grief:

Not wanting to divulge more details, all Murray would say about Lenny's death is that it was "like a bad nightmare," and something he tries not to think about.

"It's too hurtful to do in the media," he explained simply.

The children, Niya, Lenny and James, were born with deletion, a condition in which part of a chromosome is missing crucial genetic material. Lenny was the most severely affected and used a wheelchair. He was also Murray's biggest fan.

"He was super enthusiastic about coming to the games," Murray said. "That's what makes it such a sore spot for me."

The family would often make the seven-hour drive from their home in Missouri City, Texas, up to Norman, Oklahoma, where Murray played for the Sooners. He started at linebacker for three years and racked up 334 tackles and 9.5 sacks. His biggest year came as a sophomore in 2018, when he had 155 tackles, including a school record 28 in an overtime win over Army.

Murray was co-Big 12 defensive freshman of the year in 2017 and second-team all-conference in 2018 before being a first-team All-Big 12 and third-team All-America pick in 2019. His work ethic was legendary. He'd often watch five to six hours of film a day early in the morning before class. And when he was selected in the first round of the 2020 draft by the Chargers with the No. 23 pick, his entire family was with him as GM Tom Telesco made the call that would change his football life.

He's carried his work ethic with him to the NFL, where he had 107 tackles as a rookie a year ago and 20 through three games this season with the Chargers (2-1), who host the Las Vegas Raiders (3-0) on Monday Night Football (8:15 p.m. ET, ESPN). Murray will miss Monday's game with an ankle injury suffered in practice Saturday.

"We have just a great group on defense including Kenneth, we have him and [S] Derwin [James Jr.]," Chargers defensive end Joey Bosa said. "All the guys during practice every week, every day, they always bring energy so they have been great."

"He has worked extremely hard," Chargers defensive coordinator Renaldo Hill said. "We have talked about playing him downhill, being back and being able to run sideline to sideline. He has all of those traits."

When the children arrived at the Murray home 11 years ago, Murray and his biological sister, Kimberly, had to grow up fast. With their parents, they helped shuttle the kids to various doctors' appointments and therapy.

Niya is now 19 and reads at an elementary school level. James, the youngest, is 12 and uses a wheelchair. Lenny was the sports fan in the group and used to spend hours in front of the TV watching whatever sport was being played. And they all loved traveling to Oklahoma to watch Murray perform.

Lenny and Murray would go out in the backyard and do whatever they could to emulate playing catch and other sports and activities.

It's been a painful five months since Lenny died, but Murray says his family and his faith have gotten him through the hardest times. Of his compassion, he points directly to his parents.

"I'm from them," Murray said. "It's where I get all of this."

In his pre-draft interview, Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones asked Murray what challenge has made him who he is on and off the field. He pointed to his experience growing up with his siblings.

"I look at it not as a setback, but as a blessing," he answered. "When I was growing up, my mom and my dad did things that were true acts of selflessness."

It's what inspired him to work as a church counselor during summers growing up. He also volunteered at El Modena High School in Orange, California, last month to help honor the Chargers' high school coach of the month, Matt Mitchell, and be part of El Modena's pregame coin toss. Murray is an active member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and regularly visited the Children's Hospital at the Oklahoma Medical Center. His first task after the draft was to set up funds for his siblings for long-term care.

Murray cherishes every interaction that he has with his siblings, which is why Lenny's death hit so hard.

"He had special needs and you learn to appreciate the small things because you know the small goals that a lot of times, we as human beings we take for granted," Murray said. "And you learn to appreciate them when you see somebody who can't do those things and still finds a way to be happy."

"That was Lenny."

JOSHUA PALMER

With his friend's health on his mind, Joshua Palmer aiming for bigger Chargers role

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
July 31, 2022

His position coach called him “so, so serious,” adding that Joshua Palmer is “straight-laced” to the point where it becomes “almost too much.”

To be more businesslike on the field, Palmer would have to line up in a three-piece suit. Yet before opening his second training camp with the Chargers last week, the 23-year-old wide receiver was heavily into his emotions.

Palmer's childhood friend, John Metchie III, had just revealed that he'll likely miss his rookie season with Houston after being diagnosed with leukemia.

“You hear about these things, but it never hit so close to home,” Palmer said. “I was just speechless. You don't know what to say or how to say it.”

Palmer and Metchie grew up together in Canada, in a town called Brampton, a suburb of some 600,000 northwest of Toronto. Their friendship goes back so far that Palmer said, “I don't remember not knowing him.”

Both eventually moved to the United States to pursue football and ended up in the SEC. Palmer played at Tennessee before being drafted by the Chargers in the third round last year while Metchie at Alabama before the Texans took him in the second round in April.

They were scheduled to share the field again this season in Week 4, when the Chargers play at Houston. But their next reunion is on hold indefinitely.

“John's a soldier,” Palmer said. “Right now, he's just in a different camp, a different camp that he has to get through. He'll come out with a full head of steam next season.”

With his friend on his mind, Palmer arrived in Costa Mesa for what the Chargers hope is a season of significant development. After Keenan Allen and Mike Williams, there's a need for more consistency at the team's third wide receiver spot.

Palmer finished his rookie season trending upward. Starting in Week 14 against the New York Giants — a game Allen missed because of COVID-19 — he had 18 of his 33 receptions and three of his four touchdowns. He caught a 23-yard scoring pass from Justin Herbert to convert a fourth-and-21 play late in the fourth quarter of the Chargers' dramatic season finale in Las Vegas.

“That Giants game was a huge boost for him,” Chargers wide receivers coach Chris Beatty said. “He was able to do multiple things in Keenan's role and see, ‘Hey, I can do this.’ Now, he has the confidence and it's more about mastering what he wants to do.”

Beatty almost worked with Palmer long before the two came together with the Chargers. He was an assistant at Maryland and recruited Palmer out of Fort Lauderdale's St. Thomas Aquinas High.

Palmer also nearly played in Southern California long before he was a Charger. Before committing to Tennessee, his college visits included a stop at UCLA, where a higher source evidently intervened.

“Someone told me it doesn't rain in California,” Palmer said. “The one time I was there, it rained the whole weekend. So I took that as a sign.”

Palmer's serious nature showed itself when he left Canada for South Florida to finish high school, St. Thomas Aquinas a traditional football powerhouse. At the time, he described it as “a business decision.” He was 15.

At a position that famously can produce divas and distractions, Palmer retains something closer to tunnel vision. His personality, Beatty explained, is the quietest among the Chargers' receivers.

“He's different like that,” Beatty said. “He balances the room. You can't have all comedians in there. With Josh, everybody else is joking and he's over there looking at his iPad.”

That's not to suggest Palmer lacks a lighter side. Asked if he played hockey growing up, he said only the street version before adding, “I could skate. I just couldn't stop.”

Palmer is an athlete who prefers to remain locked in. At Tennessee, Palmer prepped for the NFL on and off the field. He said during his final year of college he pretended he already was in the league. He became a harsher self-critic. He studied more film. He started taking better care of his body and tried to develop the routine of a professional athlete.

Beatty praised Palmer's approach and commitment but admitted there are times when he can dig in too deeply. The coach offered the example of Palmer trying to improve on an otherwise perfect route because the ball didn't come his way.

“He's just really so straight ahead, which is good in a lot of ways, but sometimes you overthink things,” Beatty said. “That's kind of where he is, trying to learn how to get out of his own way a little bit.”

The one thing Palmer has mastered entering this season is perspective, the situation involving Metchie and how his friend is handling it are both reminders of what's most important.

Palmer said the two have been in touch, adding that Metchie already is bouncing back. “The whole thing is hard to describe in words,” Palmer said. “But John's going to be fine. He's going to get through this.”

DONALD PARHAM JR.

Chargers' Donald Parham Jr. on injury: 'A life-flashing-before-your-eyes kind of thing'

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
April 18, 2022

DELAND, Fla. — He re-emerged here, on a small set of metal bleachers, next to an empty practice field, 2,500 miles from SoFi Stadium.

On a windy and warm spring afternoon, Donald Parham Jr. sat alone with a visitor sent to chronicle his comeback.

Nearly four months had passed since Parham disappeared from view under much brighter lights. A national television audience and sellout crowd watched as he was strapped to a stretcher and rolled out of the most frightening scene of the 2021 NFL season.

The Chargers tight end remembers all of it: the touchdown pass slipping from his grip, his head snapping back onto the turf, his body stiffening and ignoring the pleas to move even as the tremors shook his otherwise rigid arms.

"I was just thinking about if I'll ever play again," Parham said. "Really thinking about everything else I still wanted to do. It was a life-flashing-before-your-eyes kind of thing. Was it all going to be taken away from me in that instant?"

Watching the game from the family home in Lakeland, Fla., Felicia Parham said she and her husband, Donald Sr., were pulled from their seats and found themselves pacing. And praying. Mostly praying.

On their TV came a close-up of their son's face. His eyes were shut, and he wore no discernible expression.

Just moments earlier, Felicia said, she had been bouncing on the couch, shouting at the TV and rooting on her firstborn — just as always — much to the concern of the family's anxious, barking Pomeranian, Cash.

"All of a sudden," Felicia said, "everything went on pause."

Before long, she was on the phone, first with her son's girlfriend. Then with his agent. Then his girlfriend again. Then his agent's secretary. Travel plans had to be made — and right now.

A few sleepless hours later, Felicia was headed to the airport in Tampa for a 6 a.m. nonstop to LAX, an uneasy 5½ hours for a mother to do little more than think.

Brittany McGee, Parham's girlfriend, picked her up and they drove to Harbor-UCLA Medical Center.

At that blurry-eyed moment, Parham's future was very uncertain. He had talked to his mother on a video call hours earlier from the hospital, had told her he would be OK and assured he would play again. But Felicia needed to see for herself.

By the end of the weekend, everyone knew that, yes, Parham was going to be fine. But not many know the details of a situation so sobering that today Parham has no memory of that video call.

What follows is a collection of those details, an account that began with a quiet conversation on a small college campus.

Stetson University is a private school of roughly 4,300 students located among mossy oaks and waltzing palms about 40 miles north of Orlando.

Parham played here from 2015-18, two plaques displayed in the athletics building commemorating a final season in which he was the NCAA per-game leader in receptions and yards.

This is where he first truly stood his tallest, where he grew those final two inches to reach 6-foot-8, fulfilling forecasts of the pediatricians who had repeatedly told the Parhams their son was, size-wise, "off all the charts."

Parham is a student here again, working toward a communications degree he hopes to complete in the spring of 2023.

His picture hangs along the fence that encircles the practice field. A wall inside the football offices will soon feature another giant likeness, one of Parham in action as a Charger.

"He has lived up to all the expectations and become an overwhelming figure for this program and our league," said head coach Brian Young, who was the defensive coordinator during Parham's time as a Hatter. "Donald is Stetson."

State Road 44 passes next to campus and is dotted by nearby businesses with names such as Dolly's Olde Time Tavern, Lucky Ducky Arcade and DeLand Feed & Pet Supply.

To be sure, this is not a road that traditionally leads to the NFL. Parham and former teammate Donald Payne are the only Stetson players to make it to the league since the school reinstated football in 2013 after a half-century hiatus.

In that sense, the horrific scene in Inglewood on the night of Dec. 16 was another twist on a path that has seen Parham overcome going undrafted, failing to make it with a handful of NFL teams and ending up in the now-suspended XFL before the Chargers signed him.

"He's already had a detour coming out of the XFL," Payne said. "He worked his way up from that detour to make it to the biggest stage ever, catching touchdown passes on 'Monday Night Football.' Those of us who know Donald know he's got this, 1,000%."

That night, Kansas City won the coin toss and deferred, giving the Chargers the ball to start a matchup the NFL couldn't have scripted better. Young superstar quarterbacks Justin Herbert and Patrick Mahomes would battle with the AFC West lead going to the winner. Set up by a 75-yard kickoff return by Andre Roberts, Herbert and his offense quickly moved to the Chiefs' five-yard line, where it was first-and-goal. Three incompletions brought fourth down and coach Brandon Staley's decision to go for it.

"A routine play," Parham said. "We ran it a few times in practice. We were comfortable with it."

Lined up in a standing position on the right side, Parham cut inside between two linebackers, working his way toward the back of the end zone, where he ran away from safety Tyrann Mathieu as fellow safety Daniel Sorensen closed in.

He went airborne lunging for Herbert's spiral and landed on his back before coming to rest on his right side, Parham's body frozen with his arms extended in front of him and bent upward at the elbows in what experts call the fencing response, a condition that can follow trauma to the brain.

Running back Austin Ekeler arrived to help Parham to his feet before realizing something was wrong. Medical personnel were summoned and rushed from the Chargers' sideline.

Many of Parham's teammates began to gather around him. Tight end Stephen Anderson knelt nearby, dropping his head. A TV camera caught linebacker Drue Tranquill staring solemnly from one knee.

With this being a Thursday night, there were no other NFL games being played. The next day, it would be determined that 18 million people — the second-most to watch the Chargers all season — were tuned in.

"It was all very traumatic," Felicia said. "Then to be so far away and not be able to ... I was sick with my stomach. My husband was sick to his stomach. I immediately packed my bags. I had to see him."

Amid the scrambling, she sent a text message to a group of friends she called "prayer warriors," seeking support.

Payne, who also was watching the game, said his ongoing group chat "started blowing up, you know, praying for him. It was definitely something intense."

It was something familiar, as well. In August 2017, a sophomore linebacker named Nick Blakely collapsed at a Stetson practice and later died. An autopsy revealed that he had an enlarged heart.

"The Stetson community already had something along these lines happen," Payne said. "So to be in another situation where it was one of our own who was down made it even scarier."

Only 93 seconds into the most-anticipated of games, the mood inside SoFi Stadium struggled to recover, the image of Parham being wheeled out through an end-zone tunnel powerful and lasting.

And then his arms — restrained but still trembling in a way that was visible to all — caused wild speculation from people who couldn't possibly know the specifics.

"It was extremely scary," Felicia said. "To see him shaking, I didn't know what that was. So I'm checking social media and I'm seeing things about people counting him out, talking about him being paralyzed."

"I was so disheartened to see people say these things. They're not thinking about how he has a family. How are they saying such things when he's got a mom and a dad and a brother and others who love him?"

Parham said he was intubated in the ambulance en route to the hospital and remembers nothing more until awakening early Friday. He started by trying to wiggle his fingers and called his body's immediate response "a blessing."

He underwent a variety of scans and other tests, all the signs encouraging. Doctors repeatedly checked Parham's motor skills, those results similarly positive.

By mid-morning, the Chargers were able to provide an official update, announcing on Twitter that Parham had been diagnosed with a concussion and would be leaving the hospital soon.

Later that day, he posted a photo of his right hand flashing the thumbs-up and a proclamation that he'd return better than ever. The tweet was liked more than 80,000 times.

"The doctors assured me nothing was wrong in terms of paralysis or anything like that," Parham said. "My first thought was, 'OK, well I need to get out of here.' That was the biggest thing, getting out of there and getting back to reality."

He ended up spending three nights at Harbor-UCLA, his mom and girlfriend sleeping in his room on chairs, Brittany's pulled up next to his bed so the two could hold hands.

Around noon Sunday, they all left the hospital together.

A few days later, Parham walked into the Chargers' Costa Mesa facility, headed toward the locker room and was greeted by a series of friendly but disbelieving faces.

"They were freaking out, almost like they were seeing a ghost," he said. "It was kind of funny. A lot of the guys were like, 'Just go home, bro. You don't have to be here.' I was like, 'Oh, OK, my bad.' And I left."

He wanted to return as quickly as possible, Parham said, because playing in the NFL has been his truest passion for years. He also wanted to prove he was tougher than even the scariest of career-threatening incidents.

Parham has a very practical, measured approach looking back on something that has so much emotion attached.

"I didn't have to dive," he said. "I could have possibly stayed on my feet or slid almost like a baseball player. But it happened. I have to learn from it and grow from it."

"Really, it's just a learning experience. Nothing more now. I gotta protect myself. That's just my character. I'm pretty even-keeled, level-headed. I'm always able to re-evaluate and reassess and go from there."

After missing the final three games of the season, Parham was medically cleared in early February. He said he expects to rejoin his teammates for offseason workouts in May, after the semester ends at Stetson. The first day of offseason workouts for players is Monday. His want to play has not been diminished, he promised, adding that he anticipates no issues the next time he's hit or takes a hard or awkward tumble. He said he never thinks about the play, unless someone asks about it. He called the whole scene "an afterthought."

Football is "just what we do," Parham explained, his father having played running back at Albany State and his little brother, Donovan, now a linebacker at Robert Morris.

As for those tremors, Parham said no one has been able to provide a specific reason.

"One doctor explained it as having seizure-like symptoms," he said. "But they weren't sure. I saw a specialist and he said they weren't exactly seizures. No one could really pinpoint it. It was just a reaction to what happened."

The Chargers' expectations for Parham will only grow in 2022. At 24, he's entering his third NFL season and will be part of a tight-end rotation that includes veteran Gerald Everett and 2021 third-round pick Tre' McKitty.

Parham will be counted upon to stand tall again, this time after taking the most frightening of falls. Following a pause that could have been so much longer, so much worse, a twisting NFL journey will continue.

Recalling the moment she first entered her son's hospital room, Felicia said she can still feel the relief.

"I was finally able to put my eyes on him and see that he was alert and OK," she said. "It was, 'Thank you, Jesus.' It was great to see him and see that he was Donald. He had stuff wired up to him and all that, but he was Donald."

They talked about family and about faith, Felicia studying her son's answers by the word to make sure he was all right.

The subject of the game didn't really come up, Parham, in fact, admitted he was unaware the Chargers had lost — 34-28 in overtime — until days later.

But there was one thing from the night before he did mention.

"Mom," Felicia remembered Donald Jr. saying, "I should've caught that ball."

TREY PIPKINS

Chargers tackle Trey Pipkins eyes starting job after productive offseason

By Daniel Popper
The Athletic
June 23, 2022

As the 2021 season was winding down, discussions in the Chargers' offensive line room centered on offseason plans. And Trey Pipkins was looking for somewhere to work.

Rashawn Slater was coming off an All-Pro rookie season at left tackle, and he was planning to head back to Texas to train with offensive line coach Duke Manyweather, who had also trained Slater in the lead-up to the 2021 draft. Guard Oday Aboushi was still rehabbing the torn ACL he suffered in Week 5, but he, too, was planning to return to Manyweather once his knee was healthy enough.

Slater and Aboushi raved about the offseason offensive line training sessions Manyweather holds in Dallas. Pipkins asked questions and listened, and he liked what he heard.

"I just knew I wanted to go somewhere where I could get a lot of good O-line work in the offseason, along with lifting and running and stuff," Pipkins said after practice earlier this month. "I kind of talked their ear off about it and just decided to go down there and see what it was about."

After the season ended, Pipkins packed up and went to Dallas with his wife and young son, renting an Airbnb in the area. And alongside Slater and a number of other NFL offensive linemen, Pipkins honed his craft in what unavoidably amounts to the most pivotal offseason of his professional football career.

It is no secret that the Chargers have an opening at right tackle. They did not address the position in the offseason. And that means they will be looking for an internal answer. Storm Norton was the starter there last season. Norton and Pipkins will compete for the starting job in training camp.

Pipkins says he is a changed player — physically, mentally, technically. That improvement has been ongoing since he was drafted in the third round in 2019 out of Division II Sioux Falls. But he said he took another big step in Dallas this offseason. And Pipkins, who is entering the final year of his rookie contract, is eager to show Brandon Staley and the rest of the Chargers coaching staff that he is the solution at right tackle — for 2022 and beyond.

"I'm excited to get into training camp, really," Pipkins said, grinning.

Pipkins headed into his offseason with considerable momentum, but it was a battle to get there. He was fourth on the tackle depth chart coming out of training camp last season, behind starters Slater and right tackle Bryan Bulaga and swing tackle Norton. When Bulaga went down with what ended up being a season-ending injury in Week 1, it was Norton who took over at right tackle for the remainder of the season.

Pipkins' only snaps through the first six games came as the extra offensive lineman in jumbo packages. He did not play well in that role. And after a particularly poor performance against the Ravens in Week 6, Pipkins was benched. He was inactive for four straight games from Week 8 to 11.

"I was irritated with myself," Pipkins said.

Pipkins waited for another chance, and it eventually came in Week 15, in a prime-time Thursday showdown with the Chiefs. First place in the AFC West was on the line. Slater was unavailable after being placed on the COVID-19 list, and Pipkins was the next man up.

He got the start at left tackle and played the best game of his career. He was stout in pass protection. He was a force as a run blocker.

This was a turning point.

"Getting out there and showing that I could still play tackle, that was big for me — because I knew I could still do it," Pipkins said. "I wanted to prove to people that I deserve to be here and playing."

Two weeks later, Norton was inactive as he was still recovering from a stint on the COVID-19 list. Pipkins was once again called into action. He started at right tackle and played another stellar game in a must-win game for the Chargers. He did not allow a single pressure in 67 offensive snaps, according to Pro Football Focus.

Those two games from Pipkins turned heads inside the Chargers building. It certainly looked as though Pipkins had made a jump in his development. He was no longer the baby-faced neophyte who had been forced into action earlier than expected as a rookie. Pipkins rocks a full beard now, and he has also fully filled out his 6-foot-6 frame. When asked how different of a player he is now compared with his rookie season, Pipkins said, "It's astronomical."

Players develop at different speeds. For every Slater, who emerged as one of the best left tackles in football from his very first NFL game, there is a Pipkins. When the Chargers drafted Pipkins in 2019, they knew he was going to be a project. He had tantalizing athletic traits, but he had a long way to go from a technical standpoint to compete consistently in the NFL.

Were these performances Pipkins realizing his full potential? That remains to be seen. But, along with Norton's positive moments last season, it was enough for the Chargers to feel comfortable passing on a right tackle in the offseason.

Pipkins, meanwhile, got to work with Manyweather in Dallas. He pointed to several key takeaways from his training.

He spent time around established NFL veterans, like Terron Armstead and Charles Leno.

"The best part about it is just all the guys that are there," Pipkins said. "You get to hear so many different ways guys think about the game. ... The work, the lifting and the conditioning and stuff is all really good, but the best part was just being around the guys, hearing how they think about their pass sets in certain situations and run blocking these techniques and stuff like that, I think that's what helped the most, for sure."

Pipkins also found tremendous value in Manyweather's approach to teaching and coaching the offensive line.

"He's so good with just the biomechanics behind stuff, stuff that you never think about," Pipkins said. "O-line coaches ... are super good with all the football stuff and stuff like that, but they don't necessarily know all of the biomechanics stuff that strength coaches know. So (Manyweather) kind of knows both aspects of it, and the way he implements that biomechanics stuff into the O-line drills is really cool."

One example, Pipkins said, was activating the glute muscle on his hind leg in his stance before the snap. On tape, Pipkins showed that he was keeping that muscle relaxed in his stance so that he could put his weight on the instep of his foot. At the snap, Pipkins would have to activate his glute muscle to explode into his set. And that was a millisecond he lost in his initial movement.

"As soon as I would start to move, my knee would lock to activate my glute to push off," Pipkins said. "And so if you stay activated, you can push off without that extra movement."

This might seem like a minor adjustment. But winning pass protection reps is all about the margins. A millisecond here or a millisecond there is the difference between standing up a pass rusher or giving up a sack. And the same goes for things like hand placement, elbow angle or the direction you push when you make initial contact with a pass rusher — "raising up and not pushing out," as Pipkins said.

"It's just little stuff that makes a huge difference," Pipkins added. "I've changed a lot about my set that I like a lot and I feel really good about."

Pipkins returned to Dallas on Saturday, three days after the Chargers wrapped up mandatory minicamp. He will train with Manyweather over the summer break before coming back to Southern California for the start of training camp in late July.

There, Pipkins will use what he has learned — both this offseason and over the past three years — to earn a starting job for the first time in his career.

"It's definitely an opportunity," Pipkins said, "and I can't wait to take advantage of it."

CHRIS RUMPH II

Chris Rumph II Explains 'Invaluable' Situation Entering 2022 Season

By Cory Kennedy
Chargers.com
July 14, 2022

It's a sunny Tuesday afternoon in early June and the Chargers have just wrapped up their seventh practice of organized team activities (OTAs). Although Tuesday's practice is voluntary it feels like more than that, especially for a team that has had a busy offseason like the Bolts.

You can feel the energy and hear the communication as veteran players like Joey Bosa, Derwin James and Khalil Mack sub on and off the field. Amongst the proven NFL players are promising young stars like OLB Chris Rumph II who is as eager as anyone to take the field with the Bolts' new-look defense.

Heading into his second year as a pro, Rumph has set big goals for himself and is using every tool available to accomplish them.

Focus and mindset during the offseason

As rookies get drafted to their respective teams, there is a lot of information to process at once. Many players are balancing getting used to a new city and meeting a plethora of new faces all while focusing on performing well on the practice field, weight room, and in the meeting rooms.

This was the reality Rumph faced last season.

"Last year, you have so much stuff to deal with and as soon as you get drafted, I mean you're thrown into the fire," Rumph said.

In 2021, Rumph appeared in 16 games, registered 19 tackles, and got his first career sack in a win over the Cincinnati Bengals.

Now as he heads into year two and his first full offseason as a Charger, Rumph explained what his sophomore offseason has allowed him to do and how resources like his father, Minnesota Vikings defensive line coach Chris Rumph, are invaluable.

"I'm just focusing on what my job is, football," he said. "So, that was very important to me. Also being able to talk to my pops, try and pick his mind [and] everybody's mind. This is the time where you figure out what you're going to do heading into next year, what things you did good last year and what things you can carry into the next year."

Inspiration for giving back to the community

As the pressure and time commitment of an 18-week NFL season fades and the Bolts transition into the offseason, players like Rumph are given more opportunities to give back to the Los Angeles community and the Chargers fan base.

Since getting drafted by the Bolts in 2021, Rumph has made an effort to give back to those in need and has put thousands of smiles on football fans and Chargers fans alike. He's taken full advantage of that time as he's participated in numerous events like a beach cleanup, helped co-host the Chargers first-ever Draft Fest at SoFi Stadium, and played in the Chargers' third annual golf tournament that benefitted the Chargers Impact Fund. For him, a chance to make someone's day is part of his inspiration for giving back.

"Just knowing the position I'm in [and] my parents raised me well." Rumph said. "We are a God-fearing house. I'm a believer in Jesus. Any chance I get to give back and knowing I'm blessed, if I can show up and make a kid smile for five minutes, I mean that makes my day, I know it will make theirs. Just having a heart, being a great human being and following Christ."

What stands out when you get a chance to meet Rumph in person or see him at SoFi is his outgoing personality, his passion for the game of football and his penchant for giving back. Going back to his childhood, Rumph credits his dad's profession for helping build his personality and get used to life in the NFL.

"Being a coach's kid, you have to have that type of personality just to be able to move around a lot and make friends in different places and different environments.

"I look back on it now and I'm very gracious for it and appreciative because that attributes why I'm always happy, why I'm always smiling. I always talk to everybody making sure they're having a great day. I try to be that guy in the locker room, you know any time you feel like you've got to talk about something serious you can come to me you know I listen and really feel involved."

Being live at SoFi while the Bolts selected guard Zion Johnson out of Boston College was a full circle moment for Rumph, who played at fellow ACC school Duke. Rumph and Johnson played against each other in 2020, and two years later the two ACC rivals now join up on the other side of the country.

Rumph, who was just in Johnson's shoes a year ago, talked about the importance of being a mentor to the rookie class.

"[The rookies] already know they can come to me with any questions, and I'll answer them, I don't care how many." Rumph said. "I was talking to Khalil [Mack] and he told me, 'As an older guy, you've got to give what you learned from the older guys back to the younger guys and give back.' That's the thing about the community of the NFL, everybody's just giving back from stuff they were told from the older guys so I'm just trying to do my part."

"We're going to do some big things here."

The Chargers created quite the buzz across the NFL when they traded for All-Pro outside linebacker Mack back in mid-March.

Rumph used one of those tools and wasted no time reaching out to his dad, who was the Bears' defensive line coach last season, to find a way to welcome his new teammate.

"I was excited! Once I saw that news, I texted my dad and I was like, 'Let me get his number and tell him congratulations.' I texted him, 'Can't wait to work with you and we're going to do some big things here.' I mean I was really excited when I saw that and I'm looking forward to see what we can do with these sack numbers this year."

A few months later, the Chargers added another OLB in two-time Super Bowl champion Kyle Van Noy. Rumph talked about how 'invaluable' it is to have veteran outside linebackers like Mack, Van Noy and Joey Bosa in just his second year and what it's like to practice alongside the veteran trio.

"It's a lot of listening for me," Rumph said. "I mean you've got guys who have played shoot, 20-plus years combined in the NFL and I'm going into my second season. Just being able to be around them, hear them talk football, see what they see, see what moves they like, and try and take bits and pieces from their game and see if I can apply them to my game. I mean it's invaluable, especially as a young player, so I just soak in everything I can take in and at the same time, try to compete with them and be on their level or even better."

Chargers defensive coordinator Renaldo Hill talked about how good Rumph has looked with the added weight he's put on during the offseason and how beneficial it is for him to have Bosa, Mack and Van Noy as mentors.

"There are a lot of tidbits that he can gain from being in that room," Hill said. "Just how to be a pro. He'll continue to watch those guys and see how they do things on and off of the field. It's going to be a benefit for the young guy ... He's been doing everything that we've asked him to do. I know that he is going to have a huge jump, just by having those guys in the room ahead of him giving him some nuggets there."

When looking at the Bolts' OLB room, it's easy to get excited about the potential for the 2022 season. Ask Rumph, and he'll tell you why he feels they can be the top OLB group in the league this season.

"[We can be] the best. I mean if you don't think you're the best, why are we out here? I think we are going to be one of the best groups in the NFL, but at the end of the day, a lot of talk is cheap, so you've got to do it."

Goals for 2022

Despite all the new additions through free agency and the draft, Rumph has his eyes on the prize for 2022. He showed flashes of his potential during the 2021 season, but with a year under his belt, the 23-year-old is looking to do much more than that this year.

"[I'm looking to be an] impact player, I'm looking to make plays next year. I'm looking to be somebody they can count on to make big plays in big, crunch time situations. So, it starts in training camp and just keeping my head down working, keep learning the playbook and just trusting my coaching."

When it comes to working with head coach Brandon Staley and Hill, Rumph will directly learn from outside linebackers coach Giff Smith. Smith makes the switch to the OLB room after serving as the defensive line coach last year. Rumph detailed how he personally sets goals to be a better athlete and teammate each season.

"Me personally, I want to be the best, that's the goal heading into every year. I want to be top in every category, tackles, TFLs, sacks. In the NFL, I know it's harder, but I'm very confident in my abilities. I know what I can do. I have a year under my belt, I kind of know what the feel of the NFL is like and I know for sure that I'm capable of doing that."

"I've worked very hard to get here and I'm going to work even harder to stay here."

With OTAs and minicamp in the books, the Chargers now shift their focus to training camp and the preseason. Training camp gives the chance for the Chargers' best players on defense to face the best players on offense.

As the old saying goes, iron sharpens iron, and the Chargers have a lot of iron in their arsenal.

"I'm really excited, I mean I love football, this is what I want to do for the rest of my life, so any time you head into training camp you know that's another opportunity. At the end of the day, you can't take any of this for granted. Being in the NFL is an honor and a privilege. I've worked very hard to get here and I'm going to work even harder to stay here."

ASANTE SAMUEL JR.

Asante Samuel Jr. has trouble learning from one former NFL player — his dad

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
September 10, 2021

They share so much. Both defensive backs, both 5 foot 10, both known as playmakers.

These two even share their name, Asante Samuel — Sr. and Jr.

But there is one thing neither is particularly comfortable sharing with the other:

Himself.

When the Chargers drafted Samuel Jr. in the second round in April, the convenient assumption was that father helped make son, that two players so similar in style, so alike in technique just had to be close.

Turns out, that assumption was too convenient.

"People say, 'Oh, he's the son of Asante Samuel, so of course,'" Samuel Jr. said. "That's kind of giving to his legacy and taking away from mine.... For some people, it's like I'm trying to live off his name."

Said Samuel Sr.: "It's unfortunate that he still thinks that way. He's making it difficult. He's going to drive himself crazy. He should embrace it."

These two do have a relationship, one Samuel Jr. characterized as "far-distance." In separate interviews, they expressed love for each other.

But they haven't spoken in months, each saying the other struggles to communicate.

Samuel Jr. is about to begin his NFL career, Sunday when the Chargers visit Washington. Samuel Sr. played 11 years in the league, intercepting 51 passes and making four Pro Bowls.

He said he has no plans right now to attend any Chargers games.

"I don't know if he wants me there or not," Samuel Sr. said. "It seems like he doesn't want me there because of the energy he puts out."

The Chargers have 11 players who use a name suffix. There's one II and two IIIs. Samuel is one of eight who use Jr.

Not one of the others, however, is named after a man some observers argue belongs in the Pro Football Hall of Fame, a father who made cornerback the family business and passed the trade down to his only son.

Now 40, Samuel Sr. was 18 when he and his girlfriend at the time, Candice Doe, had their lone child together. They nicknamed the boy A.J.

The couple didn't stay together and both have since established families with other partners.

When A.J. was a child, Samuel Sr.'s mother, Christine, helped raise him. In fact, she was the one who started him playing football, a decision made possible only after a bold audible.

"Granny Chris" changed A.J.'s birth certificate when he was 4, instead making him two years older and eligible to enroll in a Pee-Wee league at a park near their Florida home. This is something else the Samuels share, since Granny Chris did the same thing years earlier for Samuel Sr.

"That time's over, so I guess we can't get in trouble no more," Samuel Sr. said, laughing. "She would white it out, retype it and then make a copy. I watched her do it. That thing was amazing. It looked so real."

Samuel Jr. laughed at the memory too, recalling how convincingly overmatched he was on his very first football field.

"I used to cry every time I'd go out there," he said. "But then when we started hitting, I'd get happy. That's what they've told me."

Samuel Jr. said his grandma was "like my second mom." He said she taught him to be kind to everyone and thankful for each day. Remembering her contributions, he said she "put spiritual things in me."

While Samuel Jr. was attending St. Thomas Aquinas High in Fort Lauderdale, Granny Chris died. She meant so much to Samuel Jr. that, a few years later, he delayed submitting his letter of intent with Florida State to honor her by signing on the anniversary of her death.

"She was the holding piece to the family," Samuel Jr. said. "It was hard for everybody who was close to her."

This is about the time, Samuel Sr. explained, that he and his son seemed to start drifting even further apart. He said he can recall Samuel Jr. telling him to not attend St. Thomas Aquinas' football games.

They already had a strained relationship going back to when, as a child, Samuel Jr. refused to agree with everything his father said.

"He has a lot of 'yes' men around him," Samuel Jr. said. "I was the only one who would say like, 'Oh, you could have done better.' He'd get mad at me for that. I think he pushed me away a little bit because of that."

A telling incident came in 2010, when Samuel Sr. and the Philadelphia Eagles played Minnesota. On a pass down the sideline, Samuel Sr. was defending Sidney Rice and the two went up for the ball. Rice made the catch but landed out of bounds. Afterward, Samuel Sr. recalled, that was the play his son mentioned before any others.

"It was like, 'What are you talking about? That didn't even count,'" he said. "The point is, I'm still waiting for some positivity from my child."

Samuel Jr. said he doesn't remember being a critic of his father, only someone who wouldn't always agree with him.

"You can ask anybody on this team," he said. "When they ask me about my dad, I tell them good things. I don't have no problems with him. I'm not sure why he makes it seem like I have a problem with him."

There is confusion between father and son, to be certain. Both contend the real issue is with the other. During training camp, Samuel Jr. noted that his father hadn't visited. Samuel Sr. said he can recall showing up for his son's events in the past and receiving strange looks. Their differences have seeped into social media, the blocking and unfollowing happening among members of the extended family.

There is consensus that the disconnection doesn't seem to be improving, Samuel Jr. admitting, "We both could have done better."

On Sunday, he will trot onto an NFL field for the first time in the regular season. The Chargers have expectations for the player they selected 47th overall.

There also will be expectations based on the name on the back of No. 26's jersey — "Samuel Jr.," those final two letters the heaviest of all.

"It's kind of disrespect to my hard work that I've put in," Samuel Jr. said. "People try to take that away from me just because my dad was in the NFL. But my dad's not out here with me every day practicing and making plays. My dad's not out here lifting weights, running. I did a lot on my own and with other people."

Samuel Jr. said he has heard the narrative for years, from "my peers, reporters, everybody." He wouldn't have become a high school star, wouldn't have made it to Florida State without his name.

But during the height of quarantine last year, when so much was about isolation, they came together. They worked out at a field in Florida, sometimes climbing over a locked gate to do so.

Samuel Sr. said the sessions happened every day for at least a month; Samuel Jr. said they were much less frequent than that.

But they did agree on what happened one morning when they were focusing on Samuel Jr.'s speed, running extended sprints. At one point, Samuel Jr. fell to his knees and became sick.

"He's looking at me in disbelief," Samuel Sr. said. "He can't believe this is happening to him. He's like, 'Dad, if you did this with any of my teammates at Florida State, they would be throwing up just like me right now.'"

Samuel Jr. initially balked at the story until admitting it was true, saying, "OK, I'll give him that one." He also was reluctant to talk about his father at first. Unlike Samuel Sr., he prefers to remain quiet, reserved.

Samuel Sr. will talk about pretty much anything, and he'll talk plenty about A.J.

"Will I go to a game this year?" he said. "I don't know. What am I supposed to do, just pop up? If he invites me, I'll be there. My son knows I'll be there anywhere, anyhow if any problem occurs or he needs me."

A "far-distance" relationship, indeed. And yet, Samuel Jr. is willing to offer words that suggest little distance at all.

"That's my dad," he said. "You only get one dad. I love him to death."

RASHAWN SLATER

Chargers' young star Rashawn Slater working hard to improve — even on his honeymoon

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
May 16, 2022

He produced a highlight reel of a rookie season that ended with his selection to the Pro Bowl. Even more encouraging for the Chargers, though, is how Rashawn Slater feels now when he re-watches his 2021 performance.

"I look at the tape and a lot of it kinda makes me cringe because I know there's detail and technique and sometimes I'll be like this close," the young offensive tackle said. "There's always that little room for improvement that can make a big difference."

Who knows what, exactly, a better Rashawn Slater might look like, but the Chargers would love to find out.

He was impressive as a rookie, grading out as the sixth-best left tackle in the NFL, according to Pro Football Focus.

Slater allowed only four sacks and six quarterback hits in 752 pass-blocking snaps. His run blocking ranked fourth among left tackles who played at least 800 snaps, according to PFF.

This effort came after Slater sat out his final season at Northwestern amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Unlike a year ago, he is no longer trying to find his way around the Chargers' Costa Mesa training facility as a first-round pick determined to prove his worth. He's now a pro attempting to build on a solid first step.

Slater called the shift in his reality "a huge game changer."

"I just get the opportunity to take care of business and go about my day," he said Monday following another session of organized team activities. "It's a lot different."

Slater's rookie year was capped with the Pro Bowl, but his experience there wasn't all positive. He said he contracted food poisoning during the week, something made even more unfortunate because of the game's locale.

"We're in Vegas," Slater said, laughing, "so like no one would believe me."

Slater, who turned 23 in March, is growing up in more ways than one. He got married two months ago, and he and his wife, Stassney, spent their honeymoon in Bora Bora.

During the Slaters' time there, the Chargers traded for Khalil Mack, giving Slater another notable edge rusher to work against in practice. Slater said coach Brandon Staley texted him after the deal, saying "Get your mind right."

"I better start doing some pass sets on the beach or something," a smiling Slater recalled thinking at the time.

By Monday afternoon, as the story began circulating on social media, Stassney shared on Twitter a video of Slater doing exactly that — pass sets in ankle-deep ocean water with a forest of tropical trees nearby.

Chargers rookie Rashawn Slater's football love affair: 'The sacrifices only made it grow fonder'

By Daniel Popper
The Athletic
August 2, 2021

Reggie Slater wanted his two oldest sons to love basketball the way he did.

He had devoted his life to the game, going from undersized and undrafted to an eight-year NBA veteran. He played all over the world: Spain, Turkey, Italy. He had even spent two seasons playing in the now-defunct Continental Basketball League. He loved the game, and it loved him back. This was his calling, his passion. And he was determined to pass it on to his oldest sons R.J. and Rashawn.

The boys, though, gravitated to the gridiron. There was mystery in football. Reggie had never played. Kids needed their parents to sign a permission slip to start football when Reggie was growing up in the '80s, and his mom refused. "She thought I was going to get broke up too easy," Reggie recalls. So she directed him to the gym.

R.J. and Rashawn's conscious minds were made up. They loved football. Still, Reggie was undeterred. He decided to try and coax their subconscious minds instead.

Late at night, after R.J. and Rashawn had gone to bed, Reggie would check on his sons. He quietly opened the door to the bedroom and made sure they were still sleeping. Then he tiptoed his 6-foot-7 basketball frame across the floor, leaned his head down and whispered "basketball" in their ears.

"It never worked," Reggie said, laughing.

R.J., two years older than Rashawn, led the way, as big brothers do. Football was different. It was his own path. And he loved the physicality football offered. Rashawn felt the same pull. "Sibling admiration," Reggie says.

In the Slaters' hometown of Sugar Land, Texas, a new sports love affair was blossoming — foreign for Reggie, but undeniably magnetic for R.J. and Rashawn.

On paper, Rashawn Slater was destined for the basketball court. He had all the resources a kid could ask for — namely, the right athletic genes and an experienced father who was a willing and avid teacher.

But the heart is a fickle beast. Quick feet, natural strength and a 6-foot-5 build can be passed down from father to son. But desires? Those are generated and cultivated by the individual.

Rashawn desired, craved to be on the football field, to achieve greatness there.

And thus started his journey to the Los Angeles Chargers.

Rashawn entered into that unknown, onto that blank page, and willed himself to this point — to the highest levels of the sport he loves — through determination, through 6 a.m. wakeup calls at 15 years old, through three-hour workouts in the Houston summer sun, through late-night film sessions.

"He just had a drive at a very young age," R.J. said. "He knew what he wanted, and he was going to work for it despite what anybody says."

Rashawn Slater's athletic career started with a wide array of activities. Soccer. Baseball. Yes, basketball. Even taekwondo.

Reggie owned a gym in the Houston area. One section of the gym was a martial arts studio, and Rashawn took lessons there starting in middle school. He also competed. More like dominated.

"He was in matches and people were trying to bow out because he was a big kid and he was knocking the shit out of everybody," Reggie said. "People didn't even want to fight against him, man."

No weight classes in sixth grade.

"He kicked the guy and it was something out of a Marvel movie," Reggie said. "He'd get up, whoop somebody's ass, and then sit down for two or three hours. The matches weren't long. I can tell you that."

On Saturdays, Reggie would beckon R.J. and Rashawn to the family's outdoor basketball hoop. In the driveway, Reggie would run his sons through drills — dribbling with both hands, layups, footwork, mid-range jumpers.

When they were done, R.J. and Rashawn would scamper inside to the couch and turn on college football.

Reggie might not have been able to foster a love of basketball. But there was still plenty to impart. So Reggie would sit down beside his sons and tell stories from his career and life — not necessarily to draw them back to basketball, but to instill his pillars and values: work ethic, professionalism, drive, determination, focus, loyalty.

These stories and discussions were filled with pet idioms. Writers are taught to avoid cliches. Reggie basked in them, lived by them, parented by them. Sometimes, cliches are cliches for a reason.

"He's just always been in our ear," Rashawn said. "We didn't know it at the time, but all that stuff he was telling us, it was kind of shaping us under our skin."

The people that do well are the people that do what others aren't willing to do.

Talk is cheap. Actions are way louder.

You can sit and point fingers, or you can just get better.

Control the situation; don't let the situation control you.

Enjoy what you can enjoy while you can, but once the job's at hand, it's time to go to work.

These are the lessons Reggie learned in his playing days, from veterans such as Buck Williams, Kevin Willis and Charles Oakley.

Reggie would field calls from former teammates while in the car. They would reminisce and cycle through what-ifs from their careers. Rashawn would be in the passenger seat, listening intently, internalizing these valuable nuggets.

"Here's the recipe," Reggie said. "It's up to you to put it all together."

That recipe applies to football, just as it applies to basketball.

That is because it applies to life.

"As we worked, we saw it happen," R.J. said. "It just became real and it became what we did."

These idioms were the street lamps illuminating Rashawn's path.

The boys both attended Clements High School in Sugar Land, their local public school. Clements played in the fierce and competitive Fort Bend district, part of the top flight of Texas high school football reserved for the largest schools. Clements was the district punching bag. They went 3-27 in Rashawn's four seasons.

Rashawn had opportunities to play for private schools.

But he refused. Don't point fingers. Get better.

Still, garnering recruiting recognition was like hiking through mud. R.J. was a quality high school football player and had interest from Ivy League schools. He ultimately decided to enroll and play at the Air Force Academy.

Rashawn watched his brother's recruiting process and had an epiphany. He needed to get better — much better — if he wanted to reach his goal of playing at a high-profile Division I program.

"It definitely helped Rashawn," R.J. said, "because he kind of realized some of my shortfalls."

"In Rashawn's eye, if his brother was that good, and he wasn't highly recruited, what is it that I need to do?" Reggie said.

Reggie owned that gym, Slater's Sports Zone in Fort Bend, Texas. And there, local trainer Alonzo Ford was renting out space to work with Houston high school athletes. Ford worked in tandem with Antoine Murphy, a former Baylor offensive lineman and NFL camp body who specializes in offensive and defensive line development.

One day, Ford saw Rashawn playing basketball with his dad. He was big — very big — and light on his feet.

Ford approached Reggie in the parking lot.

"Man, you got to bring your son to me," he remembered saying.

"He saw a prime specimen ready to be molded," Reggie said.

Then the work began.

Ford headed the strength and conditioning. Murphy oversaw the football-specific training.

Together, they helped Rashawn groom into a Division I prospect.

Murphy, in particular, was essential in teaching Rashawn the details of the position that laid the groundwork for the pinpoint and polished technique that made him a first-round pick.

“At an early point, I realized that you put yourself ahead by the way you work, but you also put yourself ahead by the way you execute technique,” Rashawn said. “Everyone is strong, everyone is fast. But do you have great technique? That’s when it started to build.”

Ford pushed Rashawn physically, concocting exercises and workouts to test his pupil’s genetic gifts. He put 500 pounds on the workout sled. He had Rashawn put one leg in a suspended loop and then jump with the other leg onto a 24-inch box.

“It’s fun training those type of athletes where you don’t really have a limit,” Ford said.

Murphy remembers meeting Rashawn for the first time.

“Big glasses,” he said. “So he looked kind of like a Poindexter kind of guy.”

But then Murphy saw him move.

“He could run like the wind and he could run all day,” Murphy said.

The glasses were misleading. Rashawn can come across as quiet and unassuming. He even says that during the pre-draft process, teams accused him of being “too nice.”

Rashawn’s response? “You’ve never watched the film.”

“I kind of have the ability to flip a switch like that,” he said.

Murphy saw it firsthand during those years of training. If Rashawn was getting ready to “lock in,” he would take off his glasses and hand them to Murphy.

“That’s how he gets if you beat him or if you do something that he feels like got a little dirty on him,” Murphy said. “When he hands you those glasses and he’s sweating profusely, that’s when you know, uh oh, it’s on now.”

“He’d go Clark Kent on them boys,” R.J. said.

Rashawn lived in the trenches as a high school player. He played every snap of the game as an offensive and defensive lineman. He had 10 sacks as a senior defensive end, earning All-District honors for offensive and defensive line.

Rashawn trained at both spots with Murphy.

“He would just beat guys,” Murphy said. “I had guys that were getting recruited by every school in America, and he would just beat them consistently and beat them easily and kind of put their mindset in the dumps. He would just do it easily, run back to me just laughing. ‘Ha, ha, ha.’ Just giggling.

“He’s approachable. He’s well-spoken. He’s sweet,” Murphy said. “But I’m telling you, if you make him mad, or when it’s time to turn the lights on and he’s focused, he turns into the Hulk.”

Ford and Murphy trained a group of local high school players, including Will Farrar and Dakota Crawford, two offensive linemen at Travis High School, and Dennis Osagiede, a defensive lineman at Ridge Point. All three went on to play college football.

The group saw Rashawn flipping that switch every day.

“If you look at him, yeah, he’s a big guy,” Osagiede said. “But his demeanor isn’t like, oh, he’s a fucking crusher. Nah. You just got to get in that ring with him. Ya feel me? You got to get on that field with him, and then you’ll see.”

“That dude is a whole different animal when you piss him off,” Crawford said.

The weeks during the football season were long and arduous. On top of his high school responsibilities, Rashawn was spending four days a week either training or studying with Ford and Murphy.

“That’s all I’ve known him as — a hard-working silent assassin,” Ford said.

Murphy developed Rashawn’s hand placement and usage by working him out on a boxing heavy bag. He regularly would go over to the family’s house to watch film with Rashawn upstairs. There, his football IQ took center stage.

“He’s a scholar,” Murphy said. “He doesn’t want to be surprised during the game.”

This eventually led Rashawn to create an idiom of his own.

“He says he feels most confident when he’s most prepared,” Reggie said. “I’ve heard him say that. I’m like, ‘Damn, that’s a great quote! I wish I had told you guys that.’”

The sessions with Ford and Murphy went year-round, including three times a week in the spring. Miles and miles of running, followed by footwork in the sand volleyball courts at the local park.

Inside, timed sprints on the basketball courts. Speed, conditioning, agility and technique work.

Osagiede, Farrar and Crawford became numb to Rashawn’s superhuman workout feats.

“He is so explosive, it’s ridiculous,” Crawford said.

The summer Houston heat was stifling. And Rashawn, well ...

“That dude is the sweatiest person I’ve ever seen,” Crawford said.

“I’d come home, and he had his laundry hamper that was filled with soaking wet, sweaty clothes, because sometimes he’d work out twice a day,” Reggie said. “I knew that they were doing something positive there.”

Murphy would bring film cutups of NFL offensive linemen — Tyron Smith, Jason Peters, Andrew Whitworth — and watch with his players before and after their training sessions.

“I can remember waking up early on Saturdays at 6 a.m. and it would be me, Rashawn, Coach Ford and Coach Murphy just working,” Farrar said.

The workouts were ultra-competitive.

“When we went through one-on-ones, I knew I had to come with my shit if I wanted to win the rep or even like faze him,” Osagiede said.

Osagiede trained with Rashawn for three years.

“I can count on my hand how many times I beat him in reps,” he said.

Fueling all this was Rashawn’s inquisitive mind and unquenchable thirst for greatness.

“He took care of business at a young age,” Ford said.

Reggie remembers when a Northwestern recruiter came to the house to visit with Rashawn.

Typically those visits are simply sales pitches. Not with Rashawn.

“They were going over techniques,” Reggie said. “They went into the living room and moved some furniture and started talking about how do I become a better, more skilled NCAA player. It was very unusual. I’m sitting there eating brisket and biscuits. And these guys are in stances, talking about pad level.”

Once Rashawn committed to Northwestern, he “never wavered,” according to Murphy. After his standout senior season on both sides of the ball, bigger programs came calling. But they stood no chance.

“He made his mind up and gave his word,” Murphy said. “It’s over.”

There, the foundation that Murphy and Ford laid allowed Rashawn to blossom. He started for three years, first at right tackle and then at left tackle, before opting out of the 2020 season. He spent the fall working in Dallas with offensive line coach Duke Manyweather to prepare for the draft.

Rashawn never forgot the programs that passed on him.

“I’ve been an underdog my whole life,” Rashawn said. “It’s not leaving, because that’s just part of who I am now.”

His commitment only strengthened in college. The Slaters — including Reggie’s wife, Katie, the couple’s daughter Aliyh and youngest son Rylan — went on a cruise after Rashawn had finished his freshman season and started 12 games at right tackle.

The family lounged in pool chairs, sipped on piña colodas and ate at the buffet. Relaxed. But there was often one seat left empty.

Off on the cruise deck, not far away, Rashawn was doing pass protection sets.

Cruise-goers, including his own family members, looked on, befuddled and bewildered.

“Obviously, he got made fun of,” R.J. said. “The pass pro set looks kind of goofy sometimes. But that man did not shy away from busting it out anywhere, because he was going to hone his craft regardless of where he was. If it was a vacation or not, he was going to get better.”

This was deeper than early wake-up calls or exhausting workouts. This was a lifestyle, a love affair.

A calling.

“That extra level that a lot of people don’t get to,” R.J. said.

Moments after the Chargers selected Rashawn with the 13th pick in April’s draft, the baby-faced offensive tackle was asked on the ESPN broadcast for his message to his new quarterback Justin Herbert.

“I got your back,” replied Rashawn, the franchise’s new cornerstone left tackle.

For most, this was merely a generic stock answer. Player-speak. A cliché.

But, to the Slaters, clichés are clichés for a reason. They are not throwaway sayings. They are defining, essential principles.

They are how you create your own destiny.

Ford was watching the draft from a barbershop while his son got a haircut.

“That put chills through my body,” Ford said, “because he’s been a man of his word for so long. ... I hope this quarterback understands he means that. No one is going to touch that guy. I’m putting my life on the line for this one.”

Basketball is in Rashawn’s blood. Football is in his heart.

A different game. A familiar devotion.

“He still has a love for the game that I feel like a lot of people lose once you get to the level of sacrifice he’s taken,” R.J. said. “But I feel like the sacrifices only made it grow fonder for him.”

MIKE WILLIAMS

'He gave everything he had': How Mike Williams earned his extension with the Chargers

By Daniel Popper
The Athletic
March 8, 2022

If you want to know what Mike Williams means to the Chargers — and what the Chargers mean to Mike Williams — you can start in the fourth quarter and overtime of the team's season-ending loss to the Raiders in Las Vegas.

Justin Herbert was leading and willing the Chargers on one of the most improbable comebacks in recent NFL history. And he was doing so by peppering his most trustworthy weapon with targets. Throw after throw headed Williams' direction, and catch after catch was made. Williams was in pain, though. He had banged up his leg diving for a pass in the end zone on a third-and-21 with less than five minutes remaining. After the play, Williams limped to the sideline and crouched, looking on as Herbert hit Joshua Palmer for a fourth-down touchdown.

Williams returned for the next series, diving and selling out as Herbert kept firing his way. He saved the limping for in between plays. When the ball was snapped, Williams went into playmaking mode. The Chargers fell short, of course. But over the final 8:23 of the fourth quarter and in overtime, Williams was targeted 13 times. He caught seven of those targets for 111 yards and the game-tying touchdown. Five went for first-down conversions, including two on fourth down.

"I was hurting," Williams said after the game. "But I needed to get back out there and try to help the team get the dub."

Chargers general manager Tom Telesco had walked down to the field from his box to watch overtime.

"He gave everything he had," Telesco said of Williams' effort that night. "He had nothing left by the time he got to the end of that game."

That effort — and a career season of production — was rewarded Tuesday when the Chargers reached an agreement with Williams on a three-year, \$60 million contract, The Athletic confirmed. The deal includes \$40 million fully guaranteed at signing, according to a source, a massive number considering the total value of the contract. And it came hours before the franchise-tag deadline. The Chargers could have tagged Williams and given themselves until July to negotiate a long-term extension. That they got this deal done before the deadline shows, better than anything, how the organization feels about Williams.

At \$20 million in average annual value, Williams is now tied with Amari Cooper as the fourth-highest paid wide receiver in the NFL, just behind teammate Keenan Allen, who signed a four-year extension in 2020 worth \$20.25 million in average annual value. Williams' \$40 million in fully guaranteed money is tied with Cooper for the third-most among wide receivers. Only DeAndre Hopkins and Julio Jones signed for more fully guaranteed money.

A year ago, this level of contract for Williams would have been shocking. But the former No. 7 overall pick realized his full potential under head coach Brandon Staley and offensive coordinator Joe Lombardi in 2021.

Staley, specifically, had a defined vision for what Williams could be: Not just a deep-field 50-50-ball threat, but a fully-rounded receiver who could attack in the short and intermediate areas of the field. Williams ran more slants, shallow crossers, digs and out. He was incorporated as the feature receiver in the Chargers' advantage-look game, a branch of their run-pass-option scheme. Oftentimes, Lombardi would call a run play into Herbert with what the Chargers staff termed an "advantage" tag. If Williams was covered one-on-one, Herbert could kill the run play and throw to Williams on a number of routes, often times a slant, a smoke route (a quick horizontal throw to the outside) or, if the Chargers were in the red zone, a fade route.

This vision unlocked Williams, and his production soared. Williams set a career high in targets with 129. His previous high was 90. He set a career high in catches with 76. His previous high was 49. He set a career high in yards with 1,146. His previous high was 1,001. And he caught nine touchdowns, one shy of his career high of 10.

Underlying this breakout season was a profound and burgeoning connection with Herbert — one that will only continue to grow with Williams locked up for multiple seasons.

"Mike's a special player," Herbert said in January. "I knew, as soon as I got here, how gifted he was, and what he's able to do with the 50-50 balls. I don't think he gets enough credit for the routes that he runs and the separation. He does such a great job in practice, in games, in the meeting room and in the weight room. He's a really good teammate."

With Allen and Williams both on lucrative extensions, the Chargers are devoting a solid chunk of their salary cap to one position group. But that is possible thanks to their elite quarterback playing on a cheap rookie contract.

Based on the contract numbers, I would expect Williams' 2022 cap hit to be around \$10 million, give or take. That is well below the franchise-tag cap hit of \$18.419 million, and those added savings this season were certainly a factor in the Chargers getting this extension done.

Williams earned this contract. No question about it. And do not overlook how much his willingness to play through pain — something he has done throughout his Chargers career, including in 2019, when he had a bone bruise in his knee for the final 14 games of the season — contributed to this payday.

Toughness is just as much a part of Williams' skill set as his contested-catch prowess.

He proved that in Vegas.

"If we would have won that game, it would have been a performance we would have been talking about well after the fact," Telesco said in January.

We are talking about it now.

"I'm thankful we drafted him," Telesco said. "I'm thankful he's here."

Mike Williams credits Chargers' coaching staff for throwing new contract his way

By Jeff Miller
Los Angeles Times
March 9, 2022

Brandon Staley's impact was obvious during his first season as an NFL head coach, from his fourth-down decisions to his viral news conference clips and decidedly untraditional candor.

His influence also was profound when it comes to Mike Williams and the contract extension the Chargers wide receiver signed this week.

Under Staley and offensive coordinator Joe Lombardi, Williams' role expanded exponentially in 2021, leading to a deal that guarantees him \$40 million and is worth up to \$60 million over the next three seasons.

"I'm very grateful for that," Williams said Wednesday during a media conference. "I tell them that all the time. I always tell them, 'Thank you. I appreciate you' because, I mean, without them, I probably wouldn't be in this situation."

Williams finished last season with 76 receptions for 1,146 yards — both career highs — and nine touchdowns. He was targeted 129 times, 39 more than his previous single-season best.

After being more of a red-zone and deep-ball specialist in his first three seasons in the league, Williams was dispatched all over the field and in a variety of routes by Lombardi.

His emergence included setting an NFL season record with five go-ahead touchdowns in the fourth quarter or overtime.

"When the big light's on, I'm ready to make plays," Williams said. "When everybody's watching, when the team needs a play, I feel like I'm capable of making that play. I just trust in my ability."

Williams, 27, is now one of six NFL receivers with a contract worth as much as \$20 million per season. The group includes one of his teammates, Keenan Allen, who signed a four-year deal worth up to \$80.1 million in September 2020. A pending free agent, Williams said his motivation from the start of this offseason was to remain with the Chargers, citing, among other things, the presence of quarterback Justin Herbert, who made his first Pro Bowl in his second season.

"That was a big part of it, too, just to be with a quarterback who's a franchise quarterback and able to do the things he's able to do to get me the ball," Williams said. "That was huge."