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Chargers Rookie Minicamp Media Availability

Friday, May 12, 2023 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

On the opening of Rookie Minicamp:

"Great to be out on the field. A new group of guys to coach. Excited to get the weekend started."

On his message to the rookie players:

"There's a lot of learning to do, so everything you're doing this weekend, you're doing something for the first time. Just learn as much as you can, work as hard as you can. We're just going to try and make this a big-time teaching camp for them so that when they get started with the veterans on Monday, they feel like, 'Hey, I'm one of us.'"

On an update regarding contract extension discussions surrounding QB Justin Herbert:

"No updates."

On his reaction to last night's schedule release:

"Every NFL schedule that I've played so far is really, really tough [*laughter*]. This one will be no exception."

On the bye week occurring in Week 5:

"We had an early bye [week] when I was in Chicago, 2018. That season, we had the bye after the fourth game, so that's my experience to draw from. I just know that season stuff, no matter what your bye is, we'll be ready to play the schedule as it comes."

On being scheduled to appear in six primetime games in 2023, a league maximum:

"I think we've played really well in primetime, since I've been the coach. I think our team has excelled in that time slot. The NFL is going to tell you what they think of your team by how many you get. We have a good football team and we're going to be excited to play whenever we play. But, obviously, when you're in front of the whole world, it's extra special."

On veteran WRs Keenan Allen, Mike Williams and Joshua Palmer visiting rookie WR Quentin Johnston after he was drafted to welcome him to the group:

"I think the brotherhood that we have on our football team, and the culture that we have – and our best players are responsible for the culture, and I can't think of any superstar receivers in the NFL that I'd rather have than Mike Williams and Keenan Allen learning the way, and Josh [Palmer] is such a pro going into his third season. For them to do that, I'm not surprised. That's what you need from your leaders on our football team because that's going to accelerate the development of your young guys. I'm glad that that's happening. Q is going to be one of them in that room, for sure."

On expectations for the players this weekend:

"You just want to see, I think, how they thrive in the classroom. There are a lot of components to the weekend where they have to learn so much for the first time, besides just football. There's football in the classroom, there's football on the field, special teams, offense, defense, but then it's the weight room, the equipment room, the locker room. They just have to do so much for the first time. Just seeing how they absorb all that and seeing what type of professionalism they have, I think that's something that we're all looking for, that level of professionalism, that level of focus that you have to have. Then, you want that rookie class to take shape, that brotherhood with the guys that you come in with. There are a lot of things to do this weekend, for sure."

On an update regarding RB Austin Ekeler:

"No updates on Austin [Ekeler], but same comments as before. Just looking forward to the springtime. I know that [General Manager] Tom [Telesco] had some media last week, so, as you guys know, we love this guy."

On an update regarding Herbert's non-throwing shoulder and his throwing progression:

"He's progressing through a throwing progression right now. How much he does when we actually practice? That's to be determined."

On if anything 'surprised' him with any of the draft picks 'over the last 24 hours':

"No, I don't think so. We did a lot of work on our draft picks and a lot of work on these undrafted guys, too. This is a good group of guys. [They are] as advertised. There's so much to learn about these guys as the spring goes on. We're not going to know fully about these guys until we start putting pads on, but it's a good group of young guys. They're exciting to work with. Like I said, a lot of work to do this spring."

On an update on the process involving the Head Athletic Trainer position:

"In the process. There are going to be some changes in that space and some additions, and we're excited about it. Going through a process right now. We'll let you know as those hires become official."

On if hirings have been made:

"No hires yet."

On if he saw the video of Johnston telling his mother that she can retire and the character that he possesses:

"I didn't see it, but I was made aware of that. I think that was one of the things that we were really excited about. We could see what type of player that he was, but what he meant for TCU – we were able to interview a lot of TCU players throughout the draft process, they had so many good players on that team, then their coaching staff – the character, I think, really separated him from a lot of the rest because he was a captain there, his family background and how he was raised, and what he meant to TCU, just made him a really attractive prospect because, on the field, he's capable of so much, but when you can get a special person, a special leader, like him, that makes it even a stronger pick. Excited to get to work with him and be with him full-time because there's a lot of work for him to do. As a receiver in the league, there's so much to learn, there are so many things that he needs to improve upon. But, he's the right guy to be coaching, for sure."

On the level of familiarity between QB Max Duggan and his collegiate teammates, WRs Quentin Johnston and Derius Davis, on the field today:

"They're just off to a bigger head start, but I think that it's probably like them being freshmen at TCU, everything is brand new again. You may know each other, but everything you're learning is brand new, so you almost feel like a freshman again. What we like is that they come from a really successful program and they were three of the best players at their positions in the country. We like the makeup of all three of those guys, on top of their talent. Excited to join up with them."

On the current depth of the roster:

"There's a lot of time between now and the first game. There's a window now, there will be a window during training camp. We'll look at both of those windows before the season starts to take advantage of our team because there is just so much that is going to happen. We're excited to coach this group. If we make some moves, you'll be the first to know."

WIDE RECEIVER QUENTIN JOHNSTON

On if it 'feels like' he is in the NFL yet:

"Yeah, now it does. The meetings and stuff, I felt like I was still in that before the Draft stage, just getting ready for it, still anxious. As soon as I put my cleats on and got out on the field, it was a real moment."

On if today 'felt more like an NFL practice or a TCU practice' with QB Max Duggan and WR Derius Davis on the field with him:

"It almost feels identical [*laughter*]. I go out there and see the same guy lined up next to me and the same guy in the backfield. It feels like we're back in Fort Worth [Texas] again."

On his last two weeks since being drafted, particularly going to the Lakers playoff game:

"That was a good experience. I've been out here a few times, but not really to see everything, so to do that, go to the Lakers game, was good. It was a fun time for me. I got to call all of my friends back home on FaceTime [*laughter*]. It was cool."

On if he is going to Game 6 tonight:

"No [*laughter*]. I'm going to be in my hotel, supporting them from the bed while I'm knee-deep in the playbook. That's what I'm going to be doing tonight."

On where he sat for the Lakers game:

"I was in a box, in a little VIP room. It was cool."

On if he grew up a Lakers fan:

"I grew up a LeBron [James] fan, to be honest [*laughter*]. Obviously, he's on the Lakers, so I've grown to like the Lakers now."

On if he met any celebrities:

"No, I didn't. I saw some people from up top, but I told my friends that I met them [*laughter*]."

On eventually sitting courtside:

"That would be a good feeling. You're not going to hear the end of that if I get to [*laughter*]. It's going to be all over my Instagram. I'm ready for that moment."

On expectations from the coaches this weekend:

"Getting up to speed, but coming in and playing fast, as well as knowing what to do. Act like I've been here before, that's the expectation that I have for myself. They just reiterated that to me."

On seeing his jersey for the first time:

"Honestly, it was a surreal moment. I was kind of in awe for a while, for about a week, week-and-a-half. After a moment, when all the dust settles, you realize that there is still work to be done. That's kind of where I'm at right now."

On if he has met any of the veteran receivers yet:

"All of them. When I came down, actually, I got to meet them. They hit me up, said that they wanted to meet up, talk, get to know me, as well as me getting to know them. It was a good experience."

On the conversations with the veteran receivers:

"Getting me used to everything, as much as they could in that short period of time that we were talking. Letting me know that we were all family. Letting me know what to expect. Kind of a crash course they gave me of what to expect, how stuff is run, a baseline so that I could get an understanding and feel for the football team, as much as I can at that point."

On the value of the conversation:

"That's everything. I feel like I came into a good situation, starting off initially under some guys that have been in the league, playing at a high level for a minute. I feel like I can pick a lot of their game, apply it to mine, then kind of expand from there."

On where the conversation occurred:

"When I left the facility, I went to my hotel, and they pulled up for a second."

On signing his contract:

"Honestly, it was just another stepping stone. The money is cool, but I don't plan on sitting there and blowing it. I'm going to have it in my savings account. I'm not really focused on the money, I'm focused on football."

On if there is anything that he wants to purchase:

"Me, personally? No. It's just whatever my mom wants, my dad wants, and my little brother wants. At this point, I really don't have any big-spending things that I want to do right now, other than, when I get my first house, fill my pantry up [laughter]."

On if his mom has retired yet, relating to his draft-night proclamation that she can retire now:

"Oh yeah, it came through [laughter]. She called me two days ago saying that she just put her notice in. She's trying to wait until we get a little break so that I can be up there and throw a little celebration for her. I'm not really sure when that is going to happen, but I know that she did put it in two days ago, she called me."

On being able to create the opportunity for his mother to retire:

"It means the world to me. I'm a big family person. Obviously, growing up, I wouldn't be in this position I am today if it wasn't for both of my parents and the sacrifices that they made, getting me to and from different games, different practices, different events when they had stuff planned already. I would've done the same thing for my dad, but my dad was already retired, so I just gave him a pat on the back right there [laughter]. To give back to them and see the look on their faces, it's everything."

On if he has met QB Justin Herbert yet:

"He followed me on Instagram when I first got drafted [laughter]. I haven't really had the chance to talk to him yet. But, hopefully soon, in-person, I get to talk to him."

On the message he received from Head Coach Brandon Staley in their first meeting since being drafted:

"Come in, learn the plays as fast as I can. Being a first-round pick, play like that. Don't come in relaxed like I have stuff figured out because, obviously, I don't. Just like coming into college with four or five stars, all of that stuff goes out the window when you step on the field. A refresh, a restart. That's kind of where I'm at right now, staying focused and coming through giving everything that I have every practice."

On if he will be here throughout the remainder of the offseason program:

"Yes, sir."

WIDE RECEIVER DERIUS DAVIS

On his first NFL practice with college teammates QB Max Duggan and WR Quentin Johnston:

"Max, he's been my quarterback ever since he got to TCU. It was just great to get back out there, to run routes with him. We know we already have a connection, so the timing was really on. To have Q [Johnston] out there working beside me — we were kind of winded, so we were out there joking about it. It was good to be out there with those guys."

On the familiarity level with Duggan and Johnston helping with his transition to the NFL:

"Yeah, it helps tremendously. Like I said, I've played with those guys. It allows me to go out there and just have fun, to have that confidence going out there running the routes and catching the ball."

On if he met any of the veteran wide receivers on the team:

"No, I think they have the day off, so I haven't met those guys yet."

On his conversations with Special Teams Coordinator Ryan Ficken:

"You know, just coming in and making a difference on special teams. He told me that I have to work for it. I don't want anything handed to me. I'm coming in here every day busting my ass and just going out there to compete."

QUARTERBACK MAX DUGGAN

On his first NFL practice:

"It was fun. I'm excited to be here. It's a good opportunity. There are great people around here, it's a great organization. Obviously, I have some familiarity with Q [WR Quentin Johnston] and D.D. [WR Derius Davis] coming here. It was fun."

On having college teammate WRs Quentin Johnston and Derius Davis also be going through their first NFL practice together:

"I'm happy for those guys. To see them get an opportunity and go onto the next level, it's fun. Obviously, the first day, you get to come in and it's a bunch of new guys and throwing with them. With Q and D.D., I know them a little bit and have some timing, but it was fun to be out there with them."

On differences between college and the NFL:

"I think concept-wise, it's similar from the college game to the NFL game. I think there's probably a little bit more on your plate as a quarterback in this league for protections, variations, tagging certain routes and things of that sort. I think it just kind of comes on a bigger scale. It's something that I'm learning to do. I'm excited to try and get on it."

On the message from the coaches for Rookie Minicamp:

"I think to just go out there, compete and improve every day. I think that's all they want to see from these guys. They want to evaluate, see what you can do, if you can improve every day and if you can go out and compete your butt off."

On if anything has surprised him about his experience so far:

"I don't think anything has surprised me. I think it's just football is still football. A lot of things are still the same. Everyone does something a little bit different at every place. There's nothing that's really surprised me too much."

On what it was like to see his first NFL locker:

"It's just a great opportunity to be here. To just have the chance to come here and compete. You never know what's going to happen, but I think just to have the opportunity to come in here, be with this organization and be here with these guys, these players — it's fun to be here."

On if he's met QBs Justin Herbert and Easton Stick:

"I haven't met Justin, but I met Easton. He's a great guy. I don't know Justin, personally, but I only hear good things about him from people in this organization. I'm excited to meet him and learn from him."

On if he knew Stick previously:

"I didn't know Easton, but Easton grew up in my area. He sent me a text after the draft, a really nice text. I have some mutual connections with him, but he's a great guy so far."

On Johnston:

"I think what he is on the field is such a talented player. We all know what he is as a vertical threat, what he is underneath and things of that sort. The best thing about Q is who he is as a person, who he is as a worker. He's going to show up to work every day and make people around him better. He's happy to be here and a great teammate. You never have to worry about him. That's easy throwing to him when you have guys that are that talented and are those types of men."

On Davis' speed:

"D.D. was a huge threat for us [at TCU], whether it was in special teams, punt return, kick return. Then, obviously, he was a big threat for us as a receiver, too. He can do a lot of things, obviously. His speed is what he's known for, but he's savvy. He knows how to run routes. He knows how to set people up with leverage. He's a great worker and he's going to be a good one."

On Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore:

"Coach is so smart. He's innovative. He loves ball, I think that's kind of the thing that really jumps out. His dad was a high school football coach. He's been around it a long time. I think he just loves being out here, loves being around the guys. It's going to be fun to go to work with him."

On going to a National Championship and being a Heisman Finalist:

"It was super eventful. A lot of things, a lot of ups and downs. I'm really grateful to be in those positions. A lot of people around me have supported me and helped me get there. I was surrounded by a lot of good players and teammates at TCU. I'm just grateful to be able to spend that time and experience with all of the people that helped me get there and deserved it."

On if he's heard from TCU Head Coach Sonny Dykes or former Offensive Coordinator/Quarterbacks Coach Garrett Riley:

"They all called and were excited. They were happy for everybody that was one of their players. Especially when you have a relationship with them like all of our players do, they're really happy for us. It meant a lot to get something from them."