

## **Chargers Defensive Lineman Otito Ogonnia Introductory Media Availability** **Saturday, April 30, 2022 ⚡ Hoag Performance Center ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.**

### **On being selected by the Chargers and remaining in Los Angeles:**

“It’s amazing. I’m excited. Not having to leave Southern California after playing at UCLA and going straight there, it’s an amazing experience. To be honest with you, I always knew that I was going to the Chargers — ever since I visited them, I had a feeling that I was going there. I kind of manifested it, in a way — almost tried not to jinx myself, but it ended up happening and I’m forever grateful for it.”

### **On what led to his confidence surrounding being selected by the Chargers:**

“The way that the meeting turned out, the vibe that I got, something just told me that this is the place where I can be the most successful and the place that I needed to be. Being under that staff and in that defense, it’s somewhere I can really excel. I think that it kind of went both ways; I think that they saw it out of me and I saw it out of them, so I knew that it was going to be my top destination and where I wanted to go to. It happening is a dream come true. There’s nothing better.”

### **On what he believes the Chargers like about his game:**

“I think a big thing is my abilities at the point of attack; my ability to really knock guys back, get penetration, re-set the line of scrimmage, stop the run. Even in the pass, I’m able to push back the pocket and get vertical pressure up the middle. Those are things that they ended up mentioning and those are my strengths.”

### **On his track & field background and how that translates to football:**

“Explosiveness. To be able to throw a 12-pound or a 16-pound shot put 70 feet takes enormous strength, explosiveness and speed. A lot of people think that it is pure strength, but a lot of it has to do with your hips and being able to drive from your legs, and being able to explode through your hips and through the front of the ring. Another component is just athleticism — I do a spin technique, so I rotate. To be able to rotate, at my size, and be do it really fast and explosive, takes quite a bit of athleticism. Those two things right there, as well as balance, those things really complement my game. In terms of body control and how to position the body for success, being able to out-leverage guys, from a body standpoint.”

### **On cooking and his favorite dishes to prepare:**

“Honestly, cooking would be most of the stuff that I do on the smoker. I do a ton of stuff on the smoker, like bacon-wrapped pork tenderloin or ribs or duck — things like that are what I like to smoke. I definitely specialize in baking more, though; stuff like cinnamon rolls, croissants, tiramisu, cheesecake, things like that.”

### **On the Thanksgiving Dinner that he prepared for his UCLA teammates last season and the potential of repeating that this year for his Chargers teammates:**

“For sure. That was something that I liked doing. If we can get that done, it’d be great to cook for some guys on the team, or at least the position group. I always like being able to serve guys and help guys try stuff out.”

**On what he prepared last year for his UCLA teammates on Thanksgiving:**

“No turkey, mostly because no one eats the turkey. Since it wasn’t a traditional Thanksgiving, I didn’t see the point — sometimes, turkey is just one of those things, kind of like an ornament that you just put out for the looks and for the pictures, so I wanted to go with stuff that people were going to eat, like ham and things like that. I went with ham, bacon-wrapped pork tenderloin and ribs for the meats, and some smoked duck.”

**On how UCLA’s defense becoming ‘more aggressive up front’ last season elevated his ‘draft stock’:**

“I think it’s done an enormous amount. Just being able to attack more and go vertical, being able to play a little bit more gap-and-a-half in our defense has been instrumental in our defense. Especially with some of the stuff that we did from a blitz standpoint, it got me a lot more one-on-one blocks. It’s been one of those things, that transition was extremely helpful, especially from where our defense was the first two years that I was there. We transitioned from a little bit more of a four-down [front] — maybe not as much of a true four-down, but way more of a four-down than we have been in the past. It’s been one of those things that has really helped me — and really helped a lot of guys — succeed, especially with being able to attack and penetrate.”

**On contributing to this year’s UCLA draft class:**

“It’s been great. Just where we’ve come from and being able to kind of come out on top like this at the end, especially for some of those guys that I started with like [Broncos TE] Greg [Dulcich] and [Packers OL] Sean [Rhyan] that came in a year after me, just all of the work we put in to get here and, hopefully, we’ll see more Bruins go here in the next couple of minutes. It’s one of those things where the truth to your labor is really there in front of you and it’s great to see that, especially last night when I saw Greg and Sean. I was so happy for those guys because I know all of the work that they put in. I know the time and effort that they put in. I know how bad they want it and how much they love football, so it was great to see. It’s been something that has been really special to me and my heart.”

**On why he chose to attend UCLA:**

“The biggest thing for me was that it was kind of the best situation. It allowed me to get a top-tier education at the No. 1 public school in the country, while also playing big-time football. I didn’t want to sacrifice the level of football in seeking the best education I could and then the school also gave me the best chance. [UCLA Head Coach] Chip Kelly and his staff gave me the best option and availability to be able to do track and field while I was there to be able to be a dual-sport athlete, so there wasn’t anything better that was giving me all of those options all at once. I knew it would be the spot. I know a lot of people kind of were getting at me for leaving Texas because guys rarely ever leave Texas, but it was something I had to do.”

**On how his parents feel about him staying in Los Angeles:**

“They’re OK with it. I mean, of course, my mom, especially, wants me to stay in-state because I’ve been away for so long, but I think they’re happy that I’m going somewhere familiar for the most part, and it’s not too far away from where I played — I think it was about 30 or 40 minutes when I went down there a couple of weeks ago. They’re ecstatic. I think they would’ve been ecstatic wherever I went. I think it’s even sweeter that it’s somewhere I’m more familiar with and somewhere I felt like I wanted to go and somewhere I knew I was going to go.”

**On if he knows anyone currently on the Chargers’ roster:**

“Personally, [RB] Josh Kelley.”

**On how often he connects with Kelley:**

“I just talked to him right before Senior Bowl. I got to connect with him about the process going into it. He’s been a great help and whenever he comes by the facility, we always kind of chop it up. He’s one of those guys, as you guys probably know by now, he has such a high character. He’s been instrumental in this process for me because he’s been one of those guys who has been there and done that and, of course, to go to the same team that he’s on, there’s nothing better than that. But, yeah, we stay in communication. I ask him about stuff every now and then, but that the most recent time I talked to him in-person, just because it’s been a little bit of a rollercoaster in terms of travel and whatnot, was probably right around the Super Bowl.”

**On if he's ever been in SoFi Stadium:**

"Actually, I don't think I have. I haven't been inside. I've been to SoFi, but not inside."

**On what he was doing at SoFi Stadium:**

"I think I just drove by. I parked and was just kind of looking at it right when they finished [building it]."

**On SoFi Stadium being his new home stadium:**

"It's one of the best stadiums out right now, especially with how modern and new it is, so I'm excited to be able to play there."