

## Chargers Training Camp Media Availability

Tuesday, August 8, 2023 ⚡ Jack Hammett Sports Complex ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

### DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR DERRICK ANSLEY

#### **On how the defense performed last Sunday evening in the scrimmage:**

"I saw guys playing the right way. I saw guys competing. We played with some toughness, some physicality. It wasn't perfect, but there were a lot of things that we can correct and a lot that we can grow from."

#### **On areas of improvement:**

"Alignment, stance, technique. The communication can always be better. I thought that the guys came with the right energy, the right mindset. We played tough and rugged, which is what we challenge them to do, and they answered the call on that part."

#### **On DB Mark Webb Jr.:**

"Mark [Webb Jr.] is bringing a lot of energy out there every day. He's kind of the firecracker type of guy. As soon as we get out for walk-through to flex to individual, he's a live wire all day. He's getting better at his position. He's communicating better. He's doing some good things for us."

#### **On the depth along the defensive line:**

"I think it's a testament to our depth. [General Manager] Tom [Telesco] has done a really good job of equipping us with the right body types inside. We have some young guys that we've brought in here that are developing nicely. As many reps as those guys can get, it is going to make us all better in the end, once the other guys do come back."

#### **On DL Morgan Fox and 'taking him for granted':**

"We definitely don't take him for granted [*laughter*]. He's one of our better guys on third down. He's tough, he's rugged. He's a leader. He's the same guy every day. Every day he comes in, since we got here, he's consistent on what his approach is and he's very, very hard to block on third down. On first and second down, he has some thump in there, as well. We're glad he's here. Now, we just need him to continue to be the leader that he is."

#### **On the value of interior pass rush:**

"Any time you can get rush from the three-technique, the 2i, the push up the middle, it just makes the edges even that much better. He is going to continue to work hard and be the leader that he is. We're really glad that he's here. He's had a really good camp and I don't see that change any time soon."

**On what he is 'looking to see out of the young guys' in the first preseason game:**

"Just take a deep breath. Take a deep breath, get the call, make sure the game is not too big for them, which I don't think it is because coming out here against our offense — [Offensive Coordinator] Kellen [Moore] and [QB] Justin [Herbert] and those guys over there and the weapons that they have — it's been a really good test to get some of those young guys out there. When the game comes on Saturday, just be who they are. Go out there and execute the things that they know how to do and go play hard and play tough."

**On DB Michael Jacquet:**

"Mike's a pro. He has a pro approach. He comes in every day and he's the same guy. He works hard, he's eager to learn. He's very long and he has really good ball skills. He has an offensive background from college. The corner movement, moving back to safety, has always been a good thing for people that can handle it mentally. He's done a really good job. He had a really good play today off of the slant. We're glad with where he's at."

**On Jacquet's 'awareness' on his interception today:**

"That was a tough play. Justin [Herbert] saw some things. I think Mike [Jacquet] stepped into the passing lane. It was one of those things on the battlefield. He did a really good job of catching it with his hands and took it all the way. It was a big stop for us on defense. It was a big play for the defense. They were kind of driving a little bit and he kind of kind of shut the door there."

**On S JT Woods' development mentally in the secondary:**

"When we brought him here, when we watched the tape at Baylor, he was very rangy, very explosive, could seek and track the ball. He has done those things here. He had a couple good PBUs a couple of days ago. He had a nice scrimmage. He's a work-in-progress, like all of us. He knows the things he needs to work on. But he's coming here every day and working and learning. He's being more of a commander back there. We're happy with this development, so far."

**On if Woods is 'a reliable player':**

"I think that all of the positions have to be reliable. Like Coach [Staley] said today, these kinds of split practices when we go 1s and 2s against each other, 1s and 1s, we're starting to find people that we can trust, and that we can trust to go out there and play down-in and down-out. He's in the mix, along with a couple other guys in the mix. That's what training camp is for, to find out what your depth is like on your whole team. He is battling. He's fighting. He is answering the bell, along with some other people. He has to go out there and continue to get better."

**On S Alohi Gilman:**

"I think Lo [Gilman] has been calm, as cool as the other side of the pillow [*laughter*]. He's a guy that has been here for three years now, so a lot of reps have been invested in him, and he's invested a lot into the defense. You can see some of those dividends paying him now. He has gotten his hands on a lot of balls this camp. He's kind of the guy who's getting everybody lined up, along with [S] Derwin [James Jr.]. He's a calm presence back there, very instinctive. He's tough, and he's a great person. We're happy that he's here going into Year 3 with us."

**On Gilman having 'a nose for the ball':**

"I think the biggest thing, when making plays, is knowing what you're supposed to do. Then, you can focus on what the offense is trying to do to you. He does a really good job of playing the game pre-snap. So, the game post-snap is a lot easier for him, a lot calmer for him. That's a testament to his work ethic, on the field and in the classroom. He's one of those guys that studies. He does a really good job of mentoring the younger guys, the younger safeties, and pushing those guys to be the best they can be. He's doing a really good job for us now and he's going to continue that through the rest of this camp."

## **WIDE RECEIVER KEENAN ALLEN**

### **On the film from Sunday's scrimmage:**

"I have not watched it yet. I know we started slow, real slow. Definitely something that we want to work on, to get going faster."

### **On 'what wasn't clicking' during the scrimmage:**

"I'm not sure. Our first time practicing in the afternoon, could've been a little sluggish getting into it. It took us a minute to get going. The defense came out with a lot of energy. They're on our team, too."

### **On WR John Hightower:**

"He's making a lot of plays. John [Hightower] is a guy that came in last year and from the first moment, I told coach, 'This guy's got some juice.' That's what he's been doing, he's showing us what he's capable of and making plays every day."

### **On Hightower's 'juice':**

"His speed for sure, but it's his change of direction for me. He's got the juice, so to speak. He can make guys miss in a phone booth [*laughter*]. It's good."

### **On Hightower's 'willingness to learn':**

"He's another guy who loves football. Trying to get better in every way, asking me questions about reps that he has — what I would've done, what he could he have done better. Trying to find ways to do the same moves over and over but make them look different."

### **On being two weeks into camp:**

"I was a little sore today [*laughter*]. It felt good though, made some plays myself. Just have to push through the dog days of camp."

### **On this year's camp schedule compared to previous:**

"Not really I think this camp is probably the easiest camp I've been in, just cause of the way [Head] Coach [Brandon Staley] gets us off our feet. We only go three days in a row, then get a day off. It's not too bad."

### **On QB Justin Herbert:**

"This guy is way more comfortable, way more. He is way more comfortable [*laughter*]. He's changing plays at the line of scrimmage, putting guys in spots, he's vocal. This guy's comfortable."

### **On Herbert 'becoming comfortable':**

"It takes time. You've got to find your way in this league. The more you do it, the more you see the better you get and the more comfortable you get."

### **On where Herbert's comfortability shows up:**

"Everywhere. Sideline, in the huddle before we go out, in the huddle breaking us down. He's giving speeches now."

### **On Herbert's speeches:**

"He's giving a little. He's found his spot."

### **On his previous huddle break downs:**

"It would just be like 'Hey Chargers on 3'. Now, it's a 'Hey, good day, we did this, this and this and that, that and that, and Chargers on 3.'"

**On Herbert 'being more vocal like QB Philip Rivers':**

"Absolutely, he's getting to that point. Phil [Rivers] was very vocal and leading in all types of ways. Phil was a coach, he would trash talk, he was the coach on the field. He's getting there."

**On 'if the contract or experience' is why Hebert is 'becoming more vocal':**

"I think a combination of both because he's played every year. I would say it's a fourth-year thing."

**On his contract:**

"The contract is a big thing. You get to settle down, your nerves leave you a little bit. Now you can just play football. It's all about football now and you can settle in a little more."

**On 'if a contract impacts motivation':**

"It goes either way. You see some guys more invested, and you see some guys just ride the wave. It can go both ways."

**On the offense:**

"I think we're in a good spot. Everybody is making plays; everybody is explosive and everybody looks good. [QB Easton] Stick, a second-string guy, he's making the second team look good. I like it, I like what we've got going on."

**On the competition of Star between DB Ja'Sir Taylor and CB Asante Samuel Jr:**

"Two guys that are hungry, they both want to play. Zont [Samuel Jr] is aggressive, he doesn't play like a little guy at all, Ja'Sir [Taylor] is smart and plays his leverages. I like both of them."

**On the depth of the receiver room:**

"[Offensive Coordinator] Kellen [Moore] is not really a guy who puts guys in spots and leaves them there. He changes the personnel within the play call, he puts guys where he wants them and what's best for the offense."

**On playing slot:**

"With [former Offensive Coordinator Joe] Lombardi, I was stuck at slot the whole time. I'm inside and outside now, we're all kind of inside and outside now, playing everything."

**On if they watch the Cowboys' offense from past seasons:**

"We have installs every day, so we pretty much watch them every day."

**On 'who he mimics the most' from the Cowboys' offense:**

"I would probably say [Cowboys WR] CeeDee Lamb just because he moves around a lot; slot, inside and outside. He is a change of direction guy, going left or right."

**On WR Quentin Johnston:**

"He's a guy who is going to demand respect. He's explosive and can make plays down the field. After the catch, he's going to be dangerous. He's a guy who's going to make plays for us."

**On Cal and the impact the program is facing from conference realignment:**

"It's going downhill fast. I don't know what's going on, they are like a Pac-4 right now [*laughter*]. I don't know."

## **SAFETY ALOHI GILMAN**

### **On the growth of his relationship with S Derwin James Jr.:**

"It's been good. It's cool because last year, Derwin [James Jr.], I don't think he did OTAs because he had surgery, so we missed out on that time, with Nas [former Chargers S Nasir Adderley], us three having that time. Having OTAs was huge for us, just being able to get that under our feet, especially in our system, and just playing defense, in general. That connection and that chemistry is what takes us to the next level. I think that's kind of what happened last year toward the end of the season, us connecting. That led to some good success for us."

### **On having his role solidified heading into the season:**

"For me, I just try to be myself. It just naturally flows better that way. All of us just have that genuine connection with each other, and those relationships on and off the field, I try to just be the guy who is just myself, can make everyone feel comfortable to laugh, have fun, bring in good energy. It translates well on the field."

### **On if he has any 'mental ease' entering the season with his role solidified:**

"It's the same approach since I stepped in here with the Chargers. Everything has to be earned here. I don't take that for granted. Every day, I try to come in and earn my spot. I just trained myself to be the best, even when I was a reserve guy, I felt like I was a starter. Some people may not have agreed with it, but I have viewed myself that way. I prepared myself that way so when I did get my shot, and I was out there, it was easy for me. That just comes with my mentality. It's kind of been the story of my life any way, so I'm used to it."

### **On S JT Woods:**

"It's been fun to work with him. For everyone who has been in the league, they understand how big of a jump it is from Year 1 to Year 2. I've went through that. Just seeing him grow and get better — do good things, fail — like that's all part of the process. I was exactly in the same position, so I'm with him. We're in it together. We're here to do this together. That's our mentality as a defense and for the DBs. I love working with JT. He's a great kid."

### **On advice he has given Woods:**

"Honestly, I haven't talked to him about that role, specifically, just because we're in training camp and that's not important right now. We're just working day-in and day-out, what we can do to get better. I just want to be a guy that, for him, that's a good friend, a guy who he is able to lean on. I think we have a good connection. It was like that when I was with Nas [Adderley], too. Nas is one of my best friends. That role, it doesn't feel much of a competition. We're here to do it together. Whenever our shot comes, when he gets his shot, I want him to go out and play well, too. Just part of it."

### **On Defensive Coordinator Derrick Ansley calling him 'cool as the other side of the pillow':**

"I take that as a compliment, I guess [*laughter*]. It's definitely a compliment. I just try to come out here and be me and do me. That's been my mentality since I was in high school. I just come out here and do me. Have fun, live in the moment. Everything just flows the way it should be if you put the right mentality to work. That means a lot, coming from Coach [Ansley]. He's trying to get some points right there [*laughter*]."

### **On if he 'feels like a calm person' on the field:**

"Yes. I mean, we all get those butterflies, those nerves, I guess. But when I'm out there, I feel like a kid. I feel like playing football for me is fun because it's creative, like I can get creative. I can play the game, I can have fun. That's what drives me to just keep playing. Playing against a guy like [Justin] Herbert is awesome on the day-to-day because he keeps you thinking and making sure that you're on your head and your toes to be able to play against him. For me, it's fun because it's football. That's the way I view it."

**On being the lone Notre Dame player on the roster:**

"I'm the lone soldier right now [*laughter*]. I don't know, I might go have to talk to Tom [Telesco] and see if we can get boost up our Irish gang out here [*laughter*]."

**On LB Eric Kendricks:**

"Eric's great. I have been having so much fun with him so far. He's a football player who is able to make a lot of adjustments and just play off of each other. That's a good thing to have, especially from a secondary standpoint, a guy who is able to play off each other. We're able to play that game. It's fun because when you have that relationship, it makes all of us calm together. I love playing with him."