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## Chargers Training Camp Media Availability

Friday, August 4, 2023 ⚡ Jack Hammett Sports Complex ⚡ Costa Mesa, Calif.

### OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR KELLEN MOORE

#### **On his evaluation of the offense through the first few padded practices:**

"It's been awesome. It's just trying to establish the play style and all that sort of stuff. I think the biggest thing, when you get to pads, is that it's a big opportunity for us in the run game and in the [play-] action game. You get dropped back a lot, obviously, when you're not in pads. That's been a big focus for us."

#### **On his evaluation of the run game thus far:**

"It's been good. It's one of those things, you spend a long time during the offseason not in pads, so guys just have to get used to it. It's going to get better each and every day. You just have to be patient with it. You have to keep going at it. You have to keep giving us opportunities for it. I think it'll help in the long run."

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

"Justin [Herbert] has been excellent. Awesome command, leadership, the whole deal. Running the operation. I think he's done a great job."

#### **On if he is 'seeing' Herbert 'see the big picture in the passing game':**

"Just a big picture thought process by him, I think that has been excellent. Just him understanding the defense, him understanding what we're trying to accomplish with a play call and the different adjustments that he may be able to utilize during a particular play. I think his vision, his presence and his command has been excellent."

#### **On the attributes that Herbert possesses 'making his job easier':**

"It gives you a toolbox. It allows us to make adjustments within the game based off the defensive look. I think that's huge, that we can run a play versus a particular look or whatever it may be. I think Justin just has really good command and presence and great communication with the perimeter guys, the receiver. I think they're all dialed. They're really, really on the same page. I think that they have been able build off of what they already had in place. Then, we are able to keep continuing to build here."

#### **On WR Quentin Johnston:**

"Done a really nice job. Obviously, any time you're a rookie, you're going to get thrown into the fire. He's going to be in a lot of different situations. I think that's he's done a really good job of handling that. He is going to make a bunch of plays. He is going to make a couple that he wants back. He's going to make a couple of, maybe, alignment mistakes, but that happens when you're a young guy, the first time out there. I think he's done an excellent job. He keeps cleaning it up. He obviously is making plays each and every day. We're really excited about the role that he can provide us with."

**On what he 'needs to see' for Johnston 'to be a key part of the offense':**

"The physical stuff, I think, will take care of itself. We got him here for a reason. We see all that stuff. We're pretty good there. I think it's just the alignment, all the communication stuff, making sure you're dialed in on your assignment and all that. It's fun to go through this with younger guys. They are going to be asked to do a lot of things out here, and then we'll find what best suits them once we hit September."

**On the No. 2 running back slot with RBs Joshua Kelley and Isaiah Spiller:**

"Awesome job. Obviously, [RB] Austin [Ekeler] is going to get the reps that he needs. The other guys, we've been trying to get them as many as we can. Both guys, I think, provide a very valuable role for us. We need depth in that position. You are going to need two, three running backs in a season. We certainly have visions for big roles for both of those guys, as well."

**On evaluating running backs in practice:**

"I think that the biggest thing is the process. Are we seeing it? Is our vision and alignment where it needs to be? Certainly, the break-tackle and all of that stuff will come into play as we go. But I think that as long as the process is right, I think that's the main focus for us."

**On the offense's development 'off of the field':**

"These days are very valuable because we get two hours out here, but there's so much more to the day. It's an 11, 12-hour day, whatever it is. There's certainly a lot of meetings, a lot of stuff where we are going to get one rep in practice, then we're going to be able to clean it up and talk through it in meetings. Then, we're going to get a walkthrough. All of those reps have to count. They all have to be valuable opportunities because the look that we see in a meeting or in a walkthrough may show up in a preseason game, a regular season game — we may have never repped out here, but we need to be able to be prepared for those. These are huge."

**On if the players 'working extra on the field after practice' is OK:**

"Certainly. Our guys, I think we have the right group here, which is really fun. They all want as much as they can get. Certainly, we're resourced for those guys. They do a great job of preparing for practice."

**On 'working at an up-tempo speed in 11-on-11s':**

"We're just going through all of the different situations that come up in the season, whether it's two-minute, end-of-game, all of the in-the-game situations. Sometimes some normal situations. There are a lot of different situations in a football game, so we're trying to hit all of those. You kind of dabble in them throughout training camp. Then, as we get closer, we refine them and get them ready to roll."

## **RUNNING BACK AUSTIN EKELER**

### **On the run game:**

"The run game, in practice, is tough because you can't really get a sense of, 'Did you break that tackle?' Driving someone off of the ball is a lot different than when it's live. As far as what we have going, I feel really good about it. It's still getting into a rhythm, getting the footwork down, but really can't tell, until we get some live reps, what our run game is going to be looking like."

### **On if the group might be able to get an evaluation at Sunday evening's practice:**

"You can get closer to it in the scrimmage. It's still going to be thud-tempo, but, there are so many aspects of the run game that can't be simulated when it comes to tackle-breaking. Did that guy stop you? Did he not? Did you make him miss? Did you run through him? How far did you actually drive the guy? In the game, when you get touched, you don't just go down. Here, someone could touch me with their hand and that is a tackle. So, you have a one-yard gain, but you're running through that in the actual game. It's difficult to understand if you're not out here. It's hard to tell. I think we're in a good spot, but we'll see."

### **On the push-ups after team period:**

"We have a little competition going on. If we score, then the defense was giving us push-ups. If they stopped us, then we have push-ups. We got them today. We had it twice today, though."

### **On where that originated from:**

"I think DJ [S Derwin James Jr.] was like, 'Hey, if we stop you, you guys got 10.' [WR] Keenan [Allen] was like that, 'bet.' There it was."

### **On if the pushups 'add any motivation' to practice:**

"Yeah, we're just trying to make ways to make practice even more fun. We're out here compete for a job, but also want to make sure that we're having a good time doing it. I feel like when you feel good, whatever the motivation is, it just helps you come out here and just execute and actually emphasize the details and things like that and make sure you're doing your job."

### **On 'establishing an identity' in the run game:**

"The run game is a combination of blocking, and then who your runner is. There has to be some type of synchronized rhythm between both of those, between who's blocking and who's running the ball. Are we meshing well together? What kind of defenses are we playing against? Can we actually execute against that? For us, going against our defense, it's tough in practice every single day, when it's not actual to the ground. The run game needs to be better. Absolutely. I'm a part of that run game. For now, I'm like, 'OK, I like where our run game is at. We'll see if it is better.' It comes down to the actual games. I can't tell you if it's better or not. I don't know. We have to go play games, we have to see the results. We can judge it and look at practice and say, 'Oh, that was the right cut. You made the right cut. But did you run through that guy and did you get an extra two, three yards?' That's what it's going to take to get this run game into the right direction."

### **On 'if it is that simple':**

"That's what I can control. For me, am I in the right spot, am I in the right rhythm, am I formed for it and am I breaking tackles? Then, it comes down to the O-line. It's a mesh. It's not simple. I guess you could say it's simple, but not easy, I would say. One of those things."

**On RBs Joshua Kelley and Isaiah Spiller:**

"They've been playing hard. JK surprised me today. He had a pass block on K9 [LB Kenneth Murray Jr.] and got him pretty good. Some energy that I haven't seen in a minute. He's juiced when it comes to pass pro and it came out today. For these guys, I'm really looking forward to seeing this battle. We're all fighting for reps out here. When you have energy in the room, I think it makes us all better. We all know, 'Hey, these guys are these guys are hungry, I'm hungry.' I know that Isaiah [Spiller] is hungry. Guess what? May the best man win. That's how I got to this point. I was sixth string and chipped my way up. I know these guys are coming from my job, and I want them to, and it's for me to prove that I'm supposed to be the starter out here. If they earn reps, then that's an amazing accomplishment for them. I hope they provide it for the team because it's going to take more than just me in the backfield. I know these guys are going to be able to contribute in different ways, in their own way."

**On goals for the season:**

"For me, it's been the same. It's how I've gotten to this point in my life. It's just continue to stay consistent within my role. Build within my role. I don't necessarily set my role, but I earned my role. The role right now, going through training camp, is can you continue to lead this team, continue to be a leader on the field and off the field? Also, when it's my time to play and get reps, be consistent and make plays. Right now, that's been down in the red zone,, it's been in the passing game. Now, for me, one of my goals this season is that we have to get this run game off of where we were last year. I think we were like 31st [in the NFL]. If I did have a goal, it would be to be consistent and make sure that we're getting this run game going."

**On if the leaders on the team spoke to the rookies:**

"Yeah, we have a leadership committee. As far as talking to the rookies and everything like that, it's different because we all have our own [position] rooms. Leadership has to step up in there. There are a lot of us that come together to make a whole team. My room is very different than the receivers and the quarterbacks. The leaders in those rooms have to come together, get their guys ready to go, set the mindset. When we come out to practice, the expectation, the standard, is kept."

**On areas in which Herbert 'has taken another step on the field':**

"In my opinion, this has been his biggest step, as far as understanding the game. Me hearing him out there, he understands the protections now. He's seeing it. He's switching the calls. Not that he hasn't in the past, but now he's really on it right away. For instance, we had a look today when it was five bigs down. It looked like one of our slot [coverage defenders] was coming off the edge. He's like [alerting]. I'm like, 'I see him, I got him. You can stay in five down here.' He's like, 'Good.' That communication in the backfield that we used to have with [former Chargers QB] Phillip [Rivers]. He was like 17 years in, but I'm starting to see it with Herbert right now, and him really running it. We had an offensive possession today where we were on the ball, he's calling the plays from the line of scrimmage, mixing in play counts. I can start to see him really maturing into a veteran quarterback, which is amazing."

**On if there is a 'growing sense of ownership' for Herbert within the offense:**

"I think he has been growing into that role. He's earned that. Now, he's continuing to play up to that standard, which is what is going to be upon his shoulders. We just gave you a big contract, we expect you to be our franchise quarterback. He's going to have to continue to prove that every single year and every single day he's out here, that he is that. I think that he's done a good job with that. I'm really excited to see him continue to do that."

## **DEFENSIVE LINEMAN MORGAN FOX**

### **On the run defense:**

"I think our dedication to improving it is definitely starting to show through. Guys are communicating really well when it comes to our adjustments in the run game, taking on the mentality of being more physical, being more sound and understanding where they fit within the defense. That has been a huge point of emphasis for everyone; understand where you fit in the scheme. I think guys have really emphasized and taken it as a point of pride to improve that."

### **On 'returning most of the defense':**

"We picked it up pretty well towards the end of the season last year, we started playing a lot better in the run. I think now that guys are more comfortable in the system, more comfortable with each other, learning how to play off each other, who's going to be where; that we're able to play faster and communicate better to be where we're supposed to be."

### **On LB Eric Kendricks:**

"Great communication, he's a great leader and a great person. He works really hard to learn the calls; he understands that he's learning them as we're learning them. He asks questions if he doesn't know something he'll come ask us. He's a great communicator, puts us in the right spots and he plays fast. He's the one always running to the ball, you never have to worry about him not being around the ball or getting to the ball. It's awesome to have him around."

### **On competing against Offensive Coordinator Kellen Moore:**

"It's tough. They do a lot of stuff that messes with certain rules, and they move around a lot, they let [QB Justin] Herbert throw his arm and do what they do and get the running backs open get them moving. They have great run game and mechanics. It's been a challenge every day, but it's a good challenge. Everyone says iron sharpens iron and we've definitely been getting better."

### **On G Jamaree Salyer and G Zion Johnson:**

"They're great players, they're performing well. The best thing about them is that they ask questions. If they lose a rep, they'll ask you, 'Hey, what did you see? Am I doing something wrong?' If they beat you and you ask them, they're more than willing to tell you, 'I saw this.' They're definitely locked in this place of getting better and improving. They're both great players. They play well, they're physical, they're patient in the pass game and they're even making us better. Being around them has been awesome. I think that it's going to make us better."