



LOS ANGELES RAMS

Rams Head Coach Sean McVay – Media Availability – September 12, 2018

(On any reason for the delayed start to the press conference)

“Yeah, we just had a game on Monday night, so things got a little pushed back. We're trying to get a couple of days' worth of work into one day. Working on a little bit less sleep than normal, but not an excuse. So that's where we're at right now.”

(On if he discovered anything over the offseason to make him think the team can start faster at the Coliseum this season)

“I think it's, really, you've just got to play better. I don't think it has anything to do with being on the road or at home. I think it was – each game is kind of its individual story where you really look at it. I mean a couple of those games where you play a really good team in New Orleans and you find a way to get a great win, you play the Super Bowl champs in Philadelphia and go toe-to-toe with them. So, I think there was a lot of different reasons and really each game, you kind of just tried to look at it, 'Alright, what was the reason why we didn't get it done?' Certainly, that's a part of it, but I think there's a lot of reasons why we weren't able to have quite as successful of a record at home as we were on the road. I think the biggest thing is you want to do a good job playing well in front of our fans and hopefully we continue to try to give them a good product that they can be proud of and that they want to come out and support us.”

(On the challenges of preparing on a short week)

“The challenge is really, it's kind of similar, but a little bit different obviously because you have six days to kind of how you adjust and adapt to a Thursday night game. Really, what we did today was more mental than anything else. We had a walk-thru so the physical toll was off their bodies giving them a chance to recover from a physical Monday night game, especially just kicking off at 7:20 p.m. on the West Coast. Then, tomorrow we'll get back into what would be a normal in-season Thursday and then a Friday and try to get back onto it. But today really represented more of a walk-thru-type deal similar to how we handled last year at the end of the year. Once you want to just kind of say, 'Alright, let's focus on the mental aspect of it.' We'll try to get our timing and our rhythm down mainly on Thursday and Friday making sure that guys are as fresh as possible. So, that was kind of the approach today.”

(On if WR Pharoh Cooper is going to have surgery and if he plans to go ahead with WR JoJo Natson as the primary returner)

“Yeah, so (WR) Pharoh (Cooper) – we're going to put Pharoh on IR (injured reserve) and that's unfortunate. So, he's going to have that surgery. What a great competitor, tough guy. It's unfortunate, but I think if there's anybody that's going to respond the right way and just do what he can to get back sooner than later, it's going to be Pharoh. Then, (WR) JoJo (Natson) I think based on the way that he played in the offseason, in preseason in terms of consistency at which he fielded kickoffs, fielded the punt returns and did a nice job in that area. That was something that (Special Team Coordinator John Fassel) 'Bones' felt comfortable with him and he's a guy that we expect to take on those return responsibilities.”

(On if trust in his players was a factor in his decision to change the practice approach)

“Absolutely. That's a big part of it. I think these guys appreciate and understand how to get work in even though we're not pushing them physically. That's a credit to these players, to the right leaders that we've got in place in that locker room. I thought the coaches did a good job of kind of on short notice, getting a

plan together so that we can feel good about that first, second down phase and then we'll move on to kind of the third downs and do a good job with that tonight and then finish up with the red zone as the week progresses."

(On what he thought QB Jared Goff did well and what he'd like to see him improve after watching the tape from Monday's game)

"I thought all things considered – with the elements, the noise, the differences in the cadences, the tempos, the variations in terms of some of the motions that we were utilizing – I thought his command was excellent. I thought he played decisive. I thought he did a great job getting in and out of the huddle, commanding it. If you're just watching, you could just see his presence. He had a nice presence and a nice poise and confidence, the way that he played. There's always a couple things that you'd like back in terms of just maybe some of the third down plays, some of the shot plays. But, I thought even on a couple of those misses he threw the ball really well and I think those are plays that we'll connect on more times than not. But, I think it's trusting the protection. The main one that really stands out is I've got to be better in terms of some of the play selections in the red zone, like we mentioned. Not putting them in some bad spots. Then, on the third down where we end up having the fumble and (T) Rob (Havenstein) ends up falling on it. I think (QB) Jared (Goff) immediately – what you respect and appreciate so much about him is, 'I can't take two hands off the ball. I should have known it was a two-man structure there. Might need to run or maybe add one of the guys.' But, they did a good job playing coverage, but you've just got to make sure you're moving with two hands on the ball, being ready to step up and those things that he takes full accountability for which is what you want from your leader. There was a lot of good things, all things considered in terms of the atmosphere, the environment and then some of the things that don't show up are those two PIs (defensive pass interference) that (WR) Brandin (Cooks) ends up drawing that are 87 yards of hidden yardage that that end up leaving if you end up connecting on those. It still counts the same for us in terms of the field position."

(On what he saw from LB Cory Littleton and OLB Samson Ebukam on film)

"I think both those guys were extremely active. (OLB) Samson (Ebukam) did a great job rushing off the edge. I thought he did a good job making a bunch of TFLs (tackles for loss). You could feel his presence. He's a guy that's continuing to get better and better whether it's rushing, whether it's playing in some coverage things, understanding the nuances of the defense. I thought (LB) Cory (Littleton) was excellent. You really feel his speed and his instinct show up. On the toss play to the perimeter where he's able to race to the edge when we had an inside fire zone and he ends up making a tackle right there. Makes the pick. So, he's a guy that I want to say he had 14 – by our coaches' charts – 14 solo tackles. His communication – I thought really what says as much as anything is it was a tough start. A lot kind of unprepared for looks where you weren't really sure. His ability to settle in in addition to our coaches and then his teammates I thought was a real credit to him and their ability to be able to work through some tough things. That's why you play two halves and I thought he did a great job the other night."

(On how he approaches his game plan for the Cardinals' veteran players on a short week)

"I think you have so much respect and appreciation for the personnel. A lot of respect for (Head) Coach (Steve) Wilks, (Offensive Coordinator) Coach (Mike) McCoy on offense and (Defensive Coordinator) Coach (Al) Holcomb on defense. Really for us, it's about trying to learn what are some of the things that they've implemented schematically that might be a little bit different, but also having a respect and appreciation for when things are clean how accurate (QB) Sam Bradford can deliver the football. We know that based on his history here. You look at just the way that (WR) Larry Fitzgerald, first ballot Hall of Famer, as productive of a player as there is in this league over the course of time. Then, (RB) David Johnson is as complete as there is. When you look at it, we feel really good about our guy and then you start talking about David Johnsons, (Steelers RB) Le'Veon Bells, (Bills RB) LeSean McCoys, guys like that. So, he's a complete back. He can do a little bit of everything in terms of what he presents in the past game, as a runner. They're doing some different things schematically with him so we want to try to do a good job playing sound, making sure that we understand exactly how we want to fit, how we want to adjust to certain personnel groupings that they present. Then the same thing from an offensive standpoint with their defense. Just being mindful of – with their history with that Carolina defensive background – they've had a lot of success, a lot of tough looks that they present in some of those known passing situations. Very sound in terms of the way they fit the run on those early downs and playing a lot of single high or some of those quarter structures. So, it's

going to be great challenge. Then, obviously you've got two elite players that have been All-Pro players in (DE) Chandler Jones and (CB) Patrick Peterson who we have a huge amount of respect for. There's a lot of guys on that front and really on all three levels of their defense that give you problems."

(On where he thinks the line is between protecting the quarterback and allowing defenders to tackle the player on roughing the passer calls)

"Yeah, I think it's just continuing to use the visual examples of how things are being officiated. The tough thing is, you look at a situation like (DT) Aaron (Donald) is in where he beats the guard and he's kind of going to the ground and it ends up as he's going to the ground he's got a chance to kind of lunge and be able to make that sack. Really, if you're going to play that right it almost seems like you have to re-gain your balance and then go for him. But, I think it's just demonstrating that demeanor and that intent that you're not trying to put all your weight on him, you're not trying to hurt the guys, understanding what are they looking for in terms of those key points of emphasis. Just like anything else, the more opportunities or examples that you're able to teach from, the better equipped you are to learn and to try to handle it the best way. I think our defensive guys have done an excellent job of trying to play within the framework of the rules and then there's always opportunities that you can look and say, 'Alright, I think you're in a tough spot. Here's how we would handle it if this comes up again and let's all use this as a learning opportunity'."

(On the challenge with scheming for an opponent with a lot of coaching turnover)

"The challenge is just making sure that you don't lose sight of it's a players' game and we've got to do a great job adjusting and adapting to the personnel that the Cardinals present. But, then also be mindful of watching scheme when you're really watching Denver's offense from where (Offensive Coordinator) Coach (Mike) McCoy was and then you're watching Carolina's defense. But, when you have that first game, that gives you a good kind of blueprint of how they want to utilize their scheme and their systems. Washington does operate similar to us in terms of offense and defensively so that's a good tape for us to be able to watch. But, it's going to be a great challenge. These guys will be ready to go. Like we mentioned, they've got a lot of great players. I've got a lot of respect for (Head) Coach (Steve) Wilks, you know he'll have his football team ready to go. Division game at home. We're excited about it and any time that you get a chance to play and play for games that count, you can't help but get excited and you want to do your best to try to come away with the goal."

(On if it's too risky for WR Cooper Kupp or another receiver to play returner)

"Yeah, that's pretty much it. I think if you want to get some return opportunities, things like that – (WR) Cooper (Kupp) is so valuable to us from an offensive standpoint. Then, you've got a couple other guys that have done it, but not consistently enough to where you want to try to really get some of those off. I think with (WR) JoJo's (Natson) experience having fielded a lot of them in the preseason gave (Special Teams Coordinator John Fassel) 'Bones' a certain confidence. You can see he's a fearless competitor. I think he did a good job with the ball security, understanding how to set the returns and things like that. That's a unit that we want to try to be able to capitalize and maximize and try to get some good field position flipped for us. Losing an All-Pro player in (WR) Pharoh Cooper is a huge loss for us, but that's going to mean that some other guys have to step up and be even better. Then, JoJo is going to get a great opportunity to compete."