



## LOS ANGELES RAMS

### Rams Head Coach Sean McVay – Media Availability – September 24, 2018

#### **(Opening remarks)**

"From an injury standpoint from yesterday, getting the MRI results back – (CB) Aqib Talib, it wasn't good news on him. He is going to get a second opinion tomorrow, but more than likely, he's going to have something that will probably require surgery. But, hopefully, we'll get him back at some point in time. He'll handle it the right way and do everything he can to get back sooner than later. With (CB) Marcus Peters, we switched that from an ankle to a calf, just based on the nature of the MRI results. He'll be day-to-day and hopefully we've got a chance to get him going this week. We'll see how he feels tomorrow, but that was really encouraging news. With (OLB) Dominique Easley, looking at his knee, just the amount of toll that's been placed on that thing just through some of the previous things he has gone through - what a great story it is - but, we're anticipating that he's going to be questionable and he might be ready to go as well. (WR) JoJo Natson had hand surgery today – that went well. Based on the nature of that injury and being his left hand, how he carries the football and things like that, he'll be out for this Thursday. But, there's a chance that he might be ready to go for the Seattle (Seahawks) game following this game."

#### **(On if it was an ankle injury for Talib)**

"It was ankle, yes."

#### **(On who he would use to return punts and kicks with Natson out)**

"On a short week, it would probably be a similar set up to what we would've done yesterday. (WR) Cooper (Kupp) would return punts and then (DB) Blake Countess would return the kicks."

#### **(On if Talib might need surgery)**

"Yeah, based on our first opinion, he will. We're going to get a second opinion tomorrow. But, all things go with the way that we anticipate, you just want to make sure that you're smart about this, especially with the player. Make sure they feel most comfortable with the decisions we're making. It can't hurt to get a second opinion with some of these types of things. If that is the case, he'll get it done. Got full confidence that he'll do everything in his power to get back sooner than later. It is something that we anticipate being able to get him back at some point. When that date would be, it's hard to say right now."

#### **(On who he would look at to replace Peters and Talib this week)**

"Yeah, I think what you saw yesterday, I think it's going to be a combination of, obviously, (CB) Nickell Robey (-Coleman) has played excellent for us this year. Then, I think guys like (CB) Sam Shields and (CB) Troy Hill will be asked to step up. As far as the nature of exactly if those guys are available. Obviously, Aqib will be ruled out. With Marcus, that'll be predicated on – okay, how does he respond tomorrow. Then, if that's the case, then maybe you look at getting somebody else up as well. But, those are things that we haven't decided on, but we do have confidence that we're going to get those other guys ready to go and they played a lot of meaningful snaps yesterday."

#### **(On how confident he is that Peters will be available)**

"I think it's hard to say right now. I think we're really encouraged by the news we got. I think it's a credit to his toughness. We'll see how he feels tomorrow and that's going to be the most important thing. But, if it is a situation where he's not able to go, then it's something that you've got full confidence that those guys will

be ready to step up. All these are guys that have played a lot of football in their careers. It's going to be a really tough offense that present a lot of different problems. They've got great players that (Vikings Offensive Coordinator) Coach (John) DeFilippo does a nice job utilizing."

**(On how he deals with all of the adversity with the injuries going into a short week)**

"Yeah, I think you just deal with it as the next guys have to be ready to go. There's a lot of different teams that are dealing with different circumstances and situations. This is the hand that we're dealt and all we can do is handle it to the best of our ability. That's getting the guys ready to go, demonstrating the confidence and a belief in those guys. Making sure that, especially in this week, they get themselves ready to go, really, from a mental standpoint. You're not going to have the physical reps that you typically would, but that's where we've got to do a great job getting ourselves as fresh as possible from a physical standpoint. Handling the mental approach in a mature manner, that this team has always done up to this point. Then, hopefully, it'll lead to a good performance on Thursday night against a tough opponent."

**(On if Talib will be placed on injured reserve and if he does, how it will affect WR Pharoah Cooper and WR Michael Thomas)**

"Well, certainly you only have the ability to bring two people off of that. As far as what we do with Aqib, I think that's going to be dependent upon the nature of, what is the recovery timetable look like? There's a couple different layers to it. But, if we did do something like that, he's certainly a guy that we would definitely want to be able to bring back at some point. Now, we don't have to designate that until you actually decide to bring that person off of it. So, there's a couple elements to it. As far as that's concerned, I think we'll wait until we get the other information to be able to give you the full answer to that question."

**(On what the potential is for the wide receiver corps)**

"Yeah, I think you're seeing it. I think you're talking about three players that have played great football. They've contributed in a variety of ways. They're competing with the ball, without it. They're competing as runners, as receivers. Extremely smart, intelligent players that have great ability. I think those guys are doing an excellent job for us. You really can't say enough about what those three have done and (Wide Receiver) Coach (Eric) Yarber's guidance and leadership that he has provided. But, these guys love football. They're really talented and I think it's a special thing and we certainly don't take it for granted as coaches getting a chance to work with three guys like that, in the same room. It's definitely a unique thing and we talk about it a lot, as coaches, how lucky we are to have those guys specifically."

**(On if he imagined a scenario where he would lose both his starting cornerbacks in the same game)**

"I don't think so. You try not to think about those things, but you always do have to plan for some scenarios that do take place. You never wish injuries upon anybody. Whether it's, you look around the league and you see some of these things or these guys that you work so hard with day-in and day-out. That's one of the ugly parts of this business, is when guys end up having things occur that are really out of the framework of their control. It's Aqib getting rolled up kind of on a freak-type play. You don't think about that, but there's a lot of different teams, when you look around the league, being able to handle adversity and move forward is something that you have to be able to do. That's where guys are required to step up. Then, those players that are injured, hopefully if it's not a season ending injury, we get them back sooner than later and they'll be ready to contribute at a later point in the season."

**(On if QB Jared Goff saying that his interception was the only throw he'd like to have back and if there was anything else he'd like to see Goff improve on)**

"I thought he played a great game yesterday. I think that defense does a nice job playing visual. There was a lot of contested throws like you guys mentioned afterwards. I thought he had great command, great poise. Did an excellent job getting through progressions. I think that's as good of an off-schedule play as you guys are going to see on the touchdown pass to Cooper Kupp – steps up, two hands on the ball, big eyes down the field, people draped around his feet and he launches a perfect ball that leads Cooper in stride, he breaks a tackle and finishes. I thought that was a huge point in the game, especially just coming out of the second half to be able to do that and the momentum that it was able to give us. But, it seemed like time after time he had a good feel for just the rhythm and the flow of the game. Got us in and out of the huddle. I thought he was excellent. That was a good play by (Chargers S) Derwin James. Everything gets a little bit tighter

down in the red zone. They played a split-safety contour, did a nice job matching it. There's also the element of, 'Give credit to the defense' and I thought he made a nice play right there."

**(On if Sunday was Goff's best game that he's been here for)**

"You know what, I think it was one of his best games. I think in terms of the decision-making, the way that he threw the ball with accuracy, anticipation, especially that type of defense. They do a great job – a lot of vision defenses, where they're able to play sound and match different things. I thought he did a great job kind of understanding the nuances of what we were trying to get done and being able to make plays that some of the plays were in rhythm and then he was able to create where that's just a great player making a great play. Those were the things that showed up, but I think it was one of his more complete games. I think you could definitely say that."

**(On if he gets annoyed when he hears people refer to Goff as a system quarterback)**

"When you hear that word, I think you could take it a couple of different ways. I think he executes our system at an extremely high level. So, feel fortunate to work with him. I think it's our job as coaches to try to put our players in situations that are conducive for their success. The way that it was brought to my attention almost took away from all the great play that he's had. I think he's getting better and better. You're talking about a third-year quarterback right now – second year in the system – and I think you're really starting to see him demonstrate that mastery. But, the quarterback position entails so many different layers. You look at these guys that are first ballot Hall of Famers with the (Patriots QB) Tom Brady's – you look at even (Chargers QB) Philip Rivers yesterday – the amount of deliberate practice, the intentional reps that they're getting. If he can continue to stay in the same system, you can only imagine how good he's going to be. But, we feel really lucky to have him as our leader. I think just the way it was brought to my attention, it seemed to take away from the amount of good things that he's doing at the most difficult position and we really can't say enough about what he's done up to this point. But, there's always going to be things – whether it's coaches, whether it's players – that we can continue to look inwardly and try to continue to improve."

**(On if Peters was hurt on TE Antonio Gates' reception away from the ball or covering WR Mike Williams on the touchdown pass)**

"No, he got hurt on the (TE Antonio) Gates (play) on the third-down-and-4 where he was kind of following him in there on a specific play that we had. When he put his foot in the ground, you could see something definitely occurred right there and it was a scary moment. Fortunately, we got that good news. But still, anytime you're talking about a player that you're relying on short-space quickness, lateral abilities, those different types of things, we'll see how he feels on Thursday to be able to play at the level that we're accustomed to seeing Marcus play at."

**(On if LB Cory Littleton's play so far is what he envisioned for him)**

"Yeah, I think so. I think there was a lot of confidence in (LB) Cory (Littleton) and what we thought he could do playing that MIKE linebacker position. I think he's done an excellent job. It's one thing being able to project. It's another thing to deliver and play up to the level that he has. I think Cory – big time play he makes on special teams with the blocked punt where (DB) Blake (Countess) falls on it. But, he's just been a good football player. He's got good instincts, good awareness. You see the ability to be able to run and recognize different things. I think he's done a nice job with the communication, specifically with what the MIKE linebacker spot entails. He's playing every snap for us right now and he's playing at a high level. I think (Assistant Head Coach/Linebackers) Coach (Joe) Barry and (Assistant Linebackers Coach Chris) Shula have done a really nice job kind of incorporating where he was playing the MOE linebacker spot last year. Transitioning to the MIKE, he's really done a nice job through three games for us."

**(On if Sunday's immediate postgame recovery for Thursday night's game is something they learned and applied from last season)**

"It was a similar approach after we played Washington. It was Week 3 for us, so we played Washington and we had a very similar approach. That was really something where we felt like the guys were fresh on Thursday when we played San Francisco Week 3 last year. But, as you continue to just really educate yourself and learn from (Senior Director of Sports Medicine and Performance) Reggie (Scott) and (Director of Strength Training and Performance) Ted (Rath) and those guys about the importance from a sports science approach of how quickly can we accelerate that healing process, that recovery, so that on Thursday

we give ourselves the best chance to be feeling as good as possible from a physical standpoint. Those are things that you always defer to those guys that are the experts in that area. I think that's something that has helped us, utilizing the resources that we have at our disposal and making sure that everybody understands how important their role is. We want to try to be intentional about doing what's best for our players and that was the approach that we felt appropriate."

**(On how he thought the backup cornerbacks held up on Sunday after being thrown into a starting scenario)**

"I think we've got a lot of confidence in those guys. I think the one thing that also can't be understated is the amount of personnel groups that the Chargers threw at us. You're talking about just the command that Philip Rivers has and also (Chargers Offensive Coordinator) Coach (Ken) Whisenhunt. They had some different things that they were presenting that when you don't get the normal reps that our starters really are allocated throughout the course of the week, there's a lot of little things that you have to be in tune with, specific to the way they want to attack a (Defensive Coordinator) Coach (Wade) Phillips-type defense – whether it be in some of their normal down-and-distances or the known passing situations. But, I thought at the end, Sam (Shields) made a big-time breakup on the third down that ended up leading – or in that last series in the red zone that ended up getting them off the field and then got the ball back for the offense where they were able to run out the clock. They did some good stuff too. You still see why (Chargers TE Antonio) Gates is so savvy, understanding the nuances of how to separate, work edges on people. When we had to tighten up, I thought those guys did a nice job. To be able to step in on short notice, that was something that ultimately, they were their best at the end of the game when we had to be and I thought that was good. But, to have guys that have played a lot of football for us or played a lot of football in this league is extremely important and they'll definitely get those reps. I think we'll have a better idea of the approach with regards to Marcus, if it's going to be something that they are going to need to play and play a lot of snaps or if they've got to be ready if for whatever reason he can go, but that thing isn't feeling as good as you'd like, where they might be called on at some point."

**(On if he would tell Peters to sit this Thursday night game out if he isn't feeling 100 percent healthy or if he'll let Peters play if he feels ready)**

"I think we'll feel that out. I think that's going to be a combination of listening to the player, number one, but then also being able to project based on, 'What is the nature of the injury? What are some of the things that came back on the MRI?' So, I would say that's something that we'll probably have a better feel for tomorrow."