



LOS ANGELES RAMS

Rams Head Coach Sean McVay – Media Availability – December 20, 2018

(On if RB Todd Gurley II will practice today)

"You know what, I haven't talked to (Senior Director, Sports Medicine and Performance) Reggie (Scott) about that yet. I was getting ready to meet with him right before I was walking over here. I haven't gotten an update on how he's feeling, so I'm not sure."

(On how RB Justin Davis is doing)

"He's making good progress. He's a lot better than I think what we anticipated earlier in the week. But, we'll see on both those guys and I get a chance to talk to Reggie and those guys next."

(On what he gains the most from a little adversity)

"Well, I think, really, you get a chance to really see if you can be what you say. It's easy when things are going well. This is a great opportunity, not only for us as coaches and myself, but for our players to demonstrate the mental toughness that we talk about. Be consistent with the way that we go about our work. Not be afraid to take accountability for some of the things that have led to us not achieving the outcomes that maybe we want and staying connected. The biggest thing is that I would say that you truly get tested. That's what's been great about the way that this team has responded with a little bit of adversity that we faced. I've sensed the same exact demeanor. If anything, it's been a great response that they've had. They're doing a great job with the way that we're attacking this week. I believe it's going to put us in position to have a good performance as a team on Sunday."

(On Defensive Coordinator Wade Phillips' opening statement - the sky is not falling – and if he agrees with that statement)

"Absolutely, yeah. I mean nobody's ready to press the panic button, but we do want to be solution-oriented. To say that there's not a little bit level of increased urgency from myself, from some people, would not be accurate. But, we work really hard to try to make sure that we're able to appreciate and enjoy the outcomes that we've gotten more times than not. What you can do is, as long as you're working as hard as you possibly can, doing all the little things the right way, that's really what we define. We want to compete to the best of our ability and if you don't have any regrets, then you let the pieces fall where they may. But, when we're doing things that are very fixable, are very avoidable based on the way that we prepare – how much clarity are we able to give them as coaches – those are the things that eat at your gut and make you want to make sure that you don't make these same mistakes twice. When you lose, that's part of it because of the competitive nature of this league – how good coaches and players are from other teams. But, when things that are being done that we feel like are very correctable and avoidable that, really, we haven't done, that's where we've got to have some urgency to fix those things."

(On if he feels like he's identified what the problems are and if so, how close he is to fixing them)

"Oh, yeah. I think it's pretty clear. It's not really a magic solution. We're not taking as good of care of the football. We've got to do that. When we do get the turnovers, we've got to be able to turn those into points and not just field goals, but touchdowns. Then, we've got to avoid the negative plays and we've got to create them on defense. It's a simple solution. Things that we have done at different points in this year and we've just got to get back to emphasizing those things and making sure we understand how important they are because we've been in a lot of games like what that (Philadelphia Eagles) 'Philly' game was. Really, it was

probably even more of a struggle early on in the game against Green Bay (Packers). We just didn't turn it over and then when you really look at it, (LB) Mark Barron's able to make a safety to get it to a 10-2 ball game. We get a little bit of momentum where you hit (RB) Todd (Gurley II) on the crossing route. Then, at the end of the game, (LB) Ramik Wilson makes a big-time play to force the fumble and we run the clock out. So, there's been a lot of games that are very similar, but those couple plays that end up making the difference in winning and losing and achieving the outcome that you want, are very important and we do feel like they're very fixable."

(On it going smooth since he's been here and how he has taken the results emotionally and if he's sleeping as good as he normally does)

"I am. Really, I think it's a great challenge. You talk about, 'Are you really living what you say?' It's one thing when you're going through a win streak – different things like that – to be able to say all the right things. But when you go through a little bit of adversity, let's make sure that we talk it to all our players all the time about we see better than we hear. Let's see your reactions align with what your core beliefs and your values are. That's what we hope to be able to lean back on when you do go through some adversity and that's what's going to hopefully help us come through this on the right end and I think we're on track to doing that."

(On what he recalls about S John Johnson III when they turned him into a starter last season and how he has continued to deliver on what they told him)

"Really, it's a lot of the same things that made you like him so much coming out of Boston College – the versatility, the football instincts, the IQ. He really was doing a great job just getting better and better. I can even remember going back to his first training camp. He gets pulled aside with (Safeties) Coach (Ejiro) Evero and they do a great job of identifying some things that can help him really play at a higher level. What you love about (S) John (Johnson III) is he responded exactly the right way. He's got all the traits and characteristics that you're looking for. Then, just the overall communication skills. Got great ball skills. He's really smooth. He's a great tackler in traffic, too – a great wrap tackler. Has a good feel for how to negotiate space and be able to shoot his gun and be able to wrap guys up and get them down. Then, he can also play in the post. So, you're really not limited in any way that you can utilize a player of his versatility and he's been great."

(On if he considers getting a first-round bye in the playoffs critically important)

"I think it's important that we play well and try to go win a football game this week and we'll see what ends up happening. To say that if you have a chance to achieve a bye and you're automatically in the divisional round and that's not something we would want, that wouldn't be accurate. But, I do believe that it's about taking the necessary steps to even have those types of conversations. You sometimes get ahead of yourself where you start looking too far ahead and then you're like, 'Wow, we just lost another game and now we're not even in position to be able to do that.' So, for us to even have that conversation, we've got to take care of business with a good day of practice today and then hopefully it leads to that performance. Then, we'll see what's next. That is something that I would be lying if I said that wasn't important, but the only way we achieve that is by taking care of business this week."

(On what it was like to see CB Aqib Talib get an interception against the Philadelphia Eagles)

"It was great. Really, you're looking at a situation when it's 30-13, they're going into score. That was a big-time play that could've totally shifted the dynamics of the game, where maybe it ends up being different. But I know this, it did shift and alter just the momentum, for sure, where we're able to turn that into points. Does a great job. That's what's special about (CB) Aqib (Talib) is he understands where his play ops (opportunities) are, where he can be greedy based on some of the calls or where we are on the field. That's what's made him such an instinctual, great player is the overall intelligence, the IQ – like we're talking about with John Johnson – matches up with the talent, the ball skills to be able to finish and make those plays. It was great to see Aqib do that."

(On if he has conversations with his players about situational awareness such as kickoff returns)

"Absolutely. Those are things that (Special Teams Coordinator) 'Bones' (John Fassel) does a great job of communicating. Like you hear us say all the time, it's important. Players are always going to want to compete, specifically if you're talking about returning kicks. We've got to give them clarity with what exactly we're looking for and why. That's something that keeps us accountable as coaches – why we want to be

able to do this and then here's the reasons. I think that helps them – that creates a better understanding. But, those are certainly things – every single play entails a situational understanding. Really, it goes back to doing a great job of playing complementary football with all three phases. That was one of the things, going back to the Chicago game, where I was as disappointed in myself as anything, is just going back to having a feel for the flow of the way that our defense was playing and not putting ourselves in position to get a safety on second down. How can you be smarter, how can you be better for your players with some of the plays that you're giving to a defense that – you still always want to go compete, but if you're feeling a certain way or a certain momentum is kind of occurring, how can we find the best way to dig ourselves out of it as opposed to leaving ourselves susceptible to some mistakes. That was most importantly something that I felt like going back to that game. You learn from it and you move forward, but every single week is a learning opportunity."