



## LOS ANGELES RAMS

### Rams Defensive Coordinator Wade Phillips – Media Availability – December 27, 2018

#### **(Opening statement)**

"I think I told you guys, (DT) Aaron Donald is a good player. I'll reiterate that. We're looking forward to this game. It's a game where it's a really important game for us. It's whether you get in the final 12 or the final eight. So, that's a big factor. Obviously, playing at home, those kind of things, in the first playoff game. We're preparing that way. I think defensively we've improved over the last three or four weeks – four weeks I think we've played more consistent, the way I'd like to see them play. Still trying to get better and better and that's what we need to do pointing towards the playoffs."

#### **(On how much he would like to see DT Aaron Donald tie or break the single-season sack record)**

"It would be obviously great. To have four sacks in one game is – not many people have done that, although Aaron (Donald) has. Yeah, it'd be great. I had (former Cowboys and Broncos defensive end) Demarcus Ware where he was real close and he actually missed about five sacks that year where he had the quarterback and he got away. You don't find many guys that get in the twenties. (Hall of Fame defensive end) Reggie White had 21.0 (sacks) in 12 games that we had him, but it's a tremendous accomplishment even to get to 19.5 or 20.0. But yeah, it'd be great. He's obviously deserving of being – what he is, is the Defensive Player of the Year – the best defensive player in the league. Like I said, they don't vote for him for MVP, but I think with a record he'd have a chance. So, that'd be good."

#### **(On if he has been in a situation where he's had a player chasing the record in the last game of the season)**

"No, I think Demarcus (Ware) had 20.5 (sacks), right in there. I don't know how many he had going into the last game. Reggie at the time, I think 21.0 was the record. So, he did it in 12 games. We had some guys that made a lot of sacks, but they didn't count sacks in the old, older days. I don't know how many they had, but (Hall of Fame defensive end) Elvin Bethea is in the Hall of Fame who had a bunch when I was there with him. That's a tremendous accomplishment to be where he is, but he strives for more and we do, too."

#### **(On if he gets a sense that the record would be meaningful to Donald)**

"It has to be. Just as an accomplishment. I think when he got a big contract like that he feels like that he has to accomplish a lot – and he's done that. It goes hand-in-hand."

#### **(On if he feels like the defense is coming together over the past four weeks)**

"Yeah, I said that earlier when I came in that I think the last four weeks we've improved, we've been more consistent. We want to get better and better. You want to be playing great going into the playoffs, so this week is an important factor in that. They have a good offense now. The quarterback, (QB Nick) Mullens, I believe is like – in seven games he's thrown over 2,000 yards. That's up there with (Panthers QB) Cam Newton and (Chiefs QB Patrick) Mahomes as far as – at least I read about that. I'm sure you guys are correct on your articles. But, that's third of any rookie so he's certainly capable and their offense is capable."

#### **(On if anything has allowed the defense to play more consistently)**

"I don't know. I think the guys are – we've just worked hard at getting better, you know? Even in the walk-thrus and things like that, I think guys have done a better job of concentrating even when we're not going full speed, making sure we get all the details and so forth. Of course, (CB Aqib) Talib coming back helps

us in the pass defense and (OLB) Dante Fowler (Jr.) has helped us in the rush so forth and playing outside backer. I think it's just a combination of us trying to get better and accomplishing some of that."

**(On the contingency plans if S Lamarcus Joyner is unable to play on Sunday)**

"Well, we've got (DB) Blake (Countess) and (S) Marqui Christian 'Q,' both can play safety if (S) Lamarcus (Joyner) isn't able to play. They've been working there all year, so we have confidence in those guys. We obviously hope Lamarcus is ready."

**(On what kind of season Joyner is having)**

"I think he's been solid. He's obviously a good tackler. He's played a lot in the middle of the field, which you don't see all the plays sometimes. We need to get him in – we've tried to get him in positions where he's playing a little closer to the line of scrimmage some. But, I think he's had a solid year. I think like the rest of the group, we've started playing more consistent, especially the last part of the year."

**(On his evaluation of DT Ndamukong Suh this season)**

"Yeah, I think he's been getting better as the year has gone along. Same thing. I think he's improved as he's gone along. His pass rush and his run play, the number of plays that he's making is more the last probably four games than earlier in the year. So, I think he's just getting used to everything. Again, part of it's us or me trying to get those guys, like I said with (CB) Marcus Peters, to try to get those guys to see what they can really do well and let them do those things and not have to do some other things. You have to learn about what a guy can do, especially if you've never had him before. We've moved him around. Like I've said, he's been a real benefit that we've been able to move him around a lot. Put him at defensive tackle, put him at defensive end, put him at nose guard. I think being able to do that and learn when to do that with him and what positives we get from that, we've learned more about what to do with him, rather than him – it's more us trying to get him in the right position. He's been able to make plays."

**(On if he has any favorite phrases that Head Coach Sean McVay uses)**

"Wow. He just makes so much sense from the stuff he says. Just like you said, 'The standard is the standard' and those things. I think that's what's great about him is he keeps reiterating where everybody knows what he wants and what it is and what we're all trying to accomplish. I've always been impressed with that with him."

**(On if he has added any McVay sayings to his vocabulary)**

"I don't have a great vocabulary as far as sayings are concerned. My dad was pretty good at that stuff. But he can take his and beat yours and you're going to beat his. (Head Coach) Sean (McVay) is one of those guys that'll take his group and beats yours and take your group and beat his. He's that kind of guy."

**(On if his defenses have played better coming off of a first-round bye in the playoffs in his experience)**

"Well, we've had it a few times. I think it just depends on your team and so forth. I always think rest helps. I do think we've had a couple times where you still – one year I remember in Denver. Not the last time, but the first time I was in Denver that we went to the Super Bowl. We played, I think, Pittsburgh in the first – we had a bye and then played Pittsburgh. Like the first half, they did pretty good against us. We hadn't played in a week or so and sometimes you lose your timing a little bit, so you have to watch out for that. I think we did the same thing with the (Houston) Oilers one year when they had the run-and-shoot stuff. They scored the first two times they had the ball and then they didn't score again. Each game is its own entity, but I do think rest and you have a better chance. I think the last five teams that have won the Super Bowl had a bye the first week. So, seems like it might be a factor."