



LOS ANGELES RAMS

Rams Head Coach Sean McVay – Media Availability – Dec. 2, 2019

(On injury updates following Sunday's game)

"(WR) JoJo Natson was the only one during the game – he got a hamstring. He got it pretty good, so it's a four-to-six week injury. We'll have some further updates on what exactly that means in terms of his status and how we'll exactly handle that. (T) Rob Havenstein is continuing to make good progress. He'll be day-to-day, as will (TE) Gerald Everett with his knee. That's kind of where we're at with those guys."

(On who will step into Natson's kickoff and punt return duties)

"I think there's a good chance you could put (RB) Darrell (Henderson Jr.) back there for kick returns. Then, in terms of the punt returns, (WR) Nsimba (Webster) was a guy that did a really nice job with that in the preseason. Consistently caught the ball and he's a guy that can do a really nice job creating after the catch, getting vertical immediately. I think he would be the next guy up."

(On if he has an explanation for why the team's results this season have been unpredictable)

"I think the biggest thing that I would take away is, I love the way that our team responded from last week. I think that says as much about our team as anything. Now, the truest measurement of performance is consistency. You mentioned it – we haven't been consistent enough. But, what we can control is what we do this week. I think if the last two weeks represent anything, it's that each week is its own entity. We've got to use that energy that our guys had with the week of practice. Then, coming out – I thought you could just feel it – there was a good sense that you had from our players, their energy, their competitiveness, the fight that they had in them and their willingness to go out and play well. I thought they did that. That was truly led by the players. I think it's important our leaders continue to lead – some of those veteran guys on both sides of the ball. If we have that, that's when I feel like we're in the best chance to be able to operate at an efficient level in all three phases, which is what we expect to see from our team. This week presents another opportunity for us to see if we can stack another performance on top of what yesterday was."

(On if he can anticipate what type of performance the team will give after watching practice during the week)

"I would say I think you can just feel the energy the players have on gameday. Once kickoff comes you can just kind of feel if there's that good buzz. Obviously, like anything else, it's as the game unfolds. But, I think our guys have been pretty consistent with their weekly approach. I wouldn't necessarily say it's that. When you're getting ready to compete against the best athletes in the world, there's an element of getting ready to go and being ready to go right when kickoff comes. I think sometimes you can feel there's an overall energy that your team possesses that is a good one, that you never truly know until the game plays out. But, there was something about yesterday's buzz – I don't know what you would call it, but just the feeling that you had from our team that, that was the kind of performance that we expected. We respect the Cardinals a lot, that's a very good football team. I think one of the things that you realize when you just look at the landscape of this league as a whole – week-to-week – I don't care what records are. It's so competitive and it's such a slim margin for error. That's where you got to do a good job of capitalizing on those opportunities and using the things that you can take to draw on some confidence and build on it for the following weeks. It's very valuable and it's got to be real and it's got to be tangible."

(On if he's a Seahawks fan or a Vikings fan for tonight's game)

"Here's what I would say, these things have a way of working themselves out for us. Really, you start to do that, it really takes away from the energy that's focused on – we've got to try to put together a great gameplan and a good week of preparation and go beat the Seahawks next week. I do believe you get what you deserve in the league. I think for our guys, all we can control is trying to play really good football, this last quarter of the season. If that's enough, then it will work itself out, and if not, our guys are the type of guys that are going to continue to compete. There is a pride about this group. There is an appreciation and respect for each other – in terms of what we want to be able to do. There's a lot of wasted energy if you start watching those things because there is still a whole month of football left."

(On if he feels like the team is in a playoff race for the wild card spot)

"I think if the season ended tomorrow, those are things that you start talking about, but four weeks is a lot of time. (If) you start worrying about – okay, we've got to catch this team, we got to catch that team – if you don't handle your business, none of it really matters, that's really the truth. For us, you start to deter and take your energy in other places worrying about things that, really, are not in our control. We have nothing to do with what that game is tonight. What we can control is try to get ready for this week. Now, I'm a fan, so I'll be watching the game. I like to see high-caliber football, which these are two really good football teams. So, I'll watch it from that stand-point. Then, obviously, it's a jump on the preparation for the team that we play."

(On what stuck out from S Taylor Rapp in the Week 13 win against the Cardinals)

"I think just his overall involvement – concept recognition. I think you see the way that he's able to just play faster. In a lot of instances, the things that you love so much about his tape at 'U-Dub' (University of Washington), is what you're seeing these last couple of weeks. You can see there is a comfort in the scheme, he has an ownership on what he's being asked to do in the framework of that specific call. Had a couple of other plays too, whether it's recognizing screens and being able to blow it up and trigger downhill when he's holding the split-safety look. Makes a play on (Cardinals RB) Kenyan Drake, making that pick, he's being asked to do a lot of different things. I think you're starting to see the versatility and really just the overall instincts and how that enables him to play faster in those close quarters. When he arrives, he gets guys down quickly. He's a great tackler. Ironically, (S) Taylor Rapp is a great wrap tackler. He's played at a high level and I think that's a reflection of his preparation. (Safeties) Coach (Ejiro) Evero has done a great job, and then I think the way that (S) Eric Weddle has influenced him has helped him in a big way, as well."

(On if he feels like the past defense has improved since the last matchup with the Seahawks)

"I think there's some situations, they made some big plays. You look at it, that was kind of earlier in the season, but he (Seahawks QB Russell Wilson) has continued to play at a really high level – making plays on-schedule, off-schedule. I think (Seahawks Offensive Coordinator) Coach (Brian) Schottenheimer does a great job of being able to pick and choose their shot-type plays – whether it was (Seahawks TE Will) Dissly or (Seahawks WR DK) Metcalf and (Seahawks WR Tyler) Lockett, they had a lot of guys that made plays for them as well. When you're looking at this team, they are continuing to produce at a high level, they are doing a great job of running the football. I think our defense has gotten better, I think we've done a nice job limiting the explosives. They were able to create some that night. For us, it's about let's dive in to the tape, let's see what they do differently than maybe what they had done the first four weeks when we played them in week five earlier. How can we minimize really a good offense overall, not exclusive to some of the things that they do in the pass game."

(On the defense only allowing one offensive touchdown in five of the last six games and how much of that is attributed to having CB Jalen Ramsey)

"Anytime that you add a player like him (CB Jalen Ramsey), it does help. I think he's done a great job of helping us where we've been able to do a couple different things that then does accentuate the skillsets of some of the other 10 around him. I think with what you've seen us being able to do, it does free up and it gives a chance to maybe be a little bit more aggressive, which then gives you an opportunity to get (DT) Aaron (Donald) one-on-one a little bit more, free up (OLB) Dante (Fowler Jr.). I think everybody has benefited from some of the versatility that we've been able to add since his addition. He clearly is a big part of that. But, then I also think it's the other 10 guys around him. Our defense has played well. We trust that

that is an outlier performance, like you mentioned with the Baltimore game. Yesterday, hopefully is more in line with what we'll consistently see this last quarter of the season."

(On what OLB Dante Fowler Jr. brings to the defense)

"He (OLB Dante Fowler Jr.) brings an explosion. A guy that can win off the edge. He's got great overall speed. I just think you can feel his presence. He plays fast, he plays violent, he's explosive when he arrives at the point of attack. I think (Outside Linebackers Coach) Chris Shula has done a really nice job with him of getting him to continue to take steps. We ask a lot of him, but his comfort level definitely shows up in the system. Things that don't really get too much credit – you look at two screens that he ended up batting down yesterday. Those are big plays where you don't end up getting your hands on those, they might have a chance to get something started. That's been a team that's had a lot of success with screens. He's making sacks, he's influencing and affecting the quarterback in a variety of different ways. You look at him, you look at (OLB) Clay (Matthews), obviously Aaron. I thought (DT) Sebastian (Joseph-Day) played his best game of the year yesterday, (DL) Michael Brockers continues to demonstrate why he's a complete player. I've been really pleased with our front overall, but Dante has done a great job. (OLB) Samson (Ebukam) as well. Samson made a bunch of plays as well yesterday."

(On reviewing the tape and if he wants QB Jared Goff blocking and giving himself up for the team or if he wants him away from the block)

"Hell yeah. Go make that block, man (laughs). I think what's as fun as anything is the excitement that you hear from the teammates. When you get a chance to show the things that we did well or that we can do better collectively, and you hear how fired up guys get. I think you pick and choose if that's a different player out there, I think he told you guys yesterday. (Cardinals CB Patrick) Peterson got him (QB Jared Goff) good around the neck right there, but he ended up getting that block and (WR) Robert (Woods) went inside. I think those are things that sometimes is just reactionary. This is still a game that is full of a bunch of different things that you don't know how to exactly a play is going to play out. If you told me that that screen was going to cut across the grain for a 48-yard gain, I would have told you there's no way. That's why when you've got 22 moving parts on each snap, sometimes things play out and I think that was a natural reaction for him. I think his guys love that and so did we."

(On having a close result the last time L.A. played the Seahawks and if that at all impacts their approach and preparation to face the Seahawks a second time)

"You always look at the previous games. This is a team that when you just look at over the last three years and even before our coaching staff was here, there's always been a good, competitive balance between these two teams. Specifically, in the six times, this will be the sixth time we've played them now. The first five have been tough challenges every single time. That's where you look back at the ones last year, especially comes down to the one possession, comes down to the last possession in our game with them this year. The last three, for sure, have been so closely contested. It's a great football team. I continue to come away impressed with just the consistency at which (Seahawks Head) Coach (Pete) Carroll has those guys playing. Got great players, they've got a consistent philosophy in terms of what they want it to look like. I think that's why you see those guys win year in and year out. It's really impressive."

(On this being one of the better games in terms of yards after catch from his receivers and if that is an indicator of offensive success)

"I think it's based on, all right, well let's break down all those yards and then identify what are the key factors in it. Sometimes it's screens and sometimes it's elite individual efforts. I think in a lot of the instances the thing that you really like from (QB) Jared (Goff), especially with the location on some front pad throws on some crossing routes. You look at (TE Tyler) Higbee hitting a 25-plus yard gain where it's a perfect throw. He hits (WR) Robert Woods on a crossing route. I think that is a very good reflection of the accuracy, the timing, the anticipation that you're throwing the ball with. Then in some of those instances a lot of those yards come from some of the screens or some of the keepers. I think that's a reflection of the unit. But I thought Jared did an especially good job of giving guys a chance to create afterwards. Certainly, our guys give him a lot of credit for being able to do some stuff on their own as well."

(On there being a couple of wide receiver screens and if they were the same play)

"There were variances of them. Here's what I would say is encouraging about the guys that we're playing with right now. Really the guys that played yesterday, I should say. When things don't always work out there's a reason why they don't and if you feel like you can solve the problem during the game both as a reflection of the coaches' and the players' ability to communicate in-between series. You don't just say, 'Oh we're never going to run that play again.' There's a reason why it didn't work out and it's not exclusive to the look or whatever. I think as a result of our players' ability to echo and articulate some of the things that they saw and then the coaches being able to communicate with them, we were able to come back to it because the reason why they didn't work, or some similar plays was very solvable for us. I thought our guys did a great job of solving some of those problems. Then certainly sometimes it entails guys creating outside of the design. We've talked about it a lot, but that 48-yard play – that's not how I draw it up. But when you've got a great player that ends up just feeling it and making a play and be able to create it on his own and guys having urgency of fighting through the down, sometimes those things have a good way of working themselves out."

(On how important RB Todd Gurley II's and Goff's involvement and performance was)

"Huge. I think that was a huge part of it. For him to get as many tough hard-earned yards. Especially in the times that he did, that allows you to be able to stay balanced, if you will, or create that run-pass conflict. Then you can get more plays off. We've talked about it, you might have a lot more plays, but sometimes those games where you have a lot of plays are a result of a bunch of second-and-longs a bunch of third downs. If you have a lot of gained first-downs in that first and second-down window, and then that can lead to more normal down-and-distance calls as you're trying to get down the field. You can be a lot more multiple in what you present to the defense. I thought (RB) Todd's (Gurley II) involvement and his contributions were instrumental in us being able to do that. I think they go hand in hand. It was unfortunate that the one 28-yard, or however long that touchdown would have been, got called back because I thought that was a really good run. It would've capped off a great day for him, but he continues to do a nice job. I thought he had some really tough hard-earned yards, especially that one run at the end of the first quarter. That was a great run and you love the way guys are just finishing and picking each other up and Todd did a great job yesterday."