



**Rams Defensive Coordinator Brandon Staley – Media Availability – September 16, 2020**

**(On what was it like to coach in Sofi stadium)**

“It was an exciting night, for sure. As you guys saw, that stadium is fantastic. I've never seen anything like it. So, to be able to deliver (Owner/Chairman E. Stanley Kroenke) Mr. Kroenke and everyone here with the Rams organization, a big win on opening night was certainly a highlight. There are so many people that have made that night possible and to give them something special was something I think we'll all remember. Certainly, excited moving forward.”

**(On his nerves for the first game being with a new team and for a new season)**

“I think we were all excited to finally play a game. I think we were all excited to play someone different. I think that game week felt a little bit more real last week knowing that at the end of the week, you're going to play somebody different and it was going to count. So, I felt like you had that excitement inside. I felt like our guys managed that excitement really well and certainly were able to adjust well during the game and certainly different because there's no fans in the stands. You didn't have that energy from the crowd to feed off of, but I felt like our guys did a really good job staying together from really warmups to the final whistle and we were able to finish the game out.”

**(On his takeaways from DL Aaron Donald in his first game)**

“I think that it's just more of what he does every single day as a Ram. I think the more you're with them, the less you're surprised by performances like he had in the first game, because it's just what you see all the time from him. He's as consistent of a performer as I've ever been around as I've ever seen. I think that you could list any top performer in any walk of life, and I would put this guy up against him or her, because of his consistency and performance. There were a couple of things that I thought that he did really well in the run game. A lot of people will allude to his sack production in his rush production, but I thought in the run game, he was excellent and allowed us to stop a very prolific running game and one of the best backs in the league.”

**(On how he felt calling plays for the defense before the game and during the game)**

“I think that I felt a lot like I did in the national semifinal against Wisconsin Oshkosh when I was at John Carroll. I felt the exact same way because I think that as a competitor, every time you get a chance to perform, it means the world to you. That is the biggest moment of your life when you get to perform. So, I felt the same way then as I did on Sunday night. I think that the way I felt, the confidence that I had, it was because of the people that I was with. We've got a tremendous coaching staff. We've got tremendous players. We've got offense in the kicking game that played complementary football. I felt really good going into the game because I felt like we prepared extremely well as a team. I felt like that's something that stood out to me from the first time we went to warmups to the last whistle, is I thought we were a team the whole night. I think going into the game, I felt really confident in our preparation, but then being our first time in a game-like environment, how well are you going to adjust? How are people going to be on the sideline when something doesn't go well? I thought that we just kept our composure the whole night in all three phases. We stayed positive, we made our corrections quickly, which is what you have to do in the NFL, make your corrections quickly. I felt like we finished the game playing our best football.”

**(His assessments on S Jordan Fuller throughout his first NFL game and at what point did he realize he could trust him throughout training camp)**

"I think early on in the acclimation period, we had a strong sense that mentally he was going to be prepared to play in the NFL early. Then certainly you just needed to see him physically hold up against some of the great skill players we have on our team. And as I mentioned in training camp, when you're performing against (TE Tyler) Higbee and (TE) Gerald Everett and (TE) Johnny Mundt, and then all those receivers that we have, (WR) Robert Cooper, (WR Josh) Reynolds (WR) Van (Jefferson), and then our runners, you get a strong sense of whether he can hold up physically, and he proved that. He was dynamic at times, you know, making plays in the deep part of the field, as well as 'running the show'. We ask a lot from our safeties running the show, you'll hear me say that a lot. He could run the show as a young guy. And I felt like the good thing guys is, he played at times like he's capable of playing, but there's certainly a lot of room for improvement with his game. He missed too many tackles for the caliber player that we think he is. I know that it was his first NFL game, but we're, we're very confident that he can play better and that he will play better. But at the same time, as I said to (Head Coach) Sean (McVay) and (General Manager) Les (Snead) and (Chief Operating Officer) Kevin (Demoff), I'm sure glad we drafted him."

**(On if tackling is something they will work on more in practice and will it get better)**

"I don't think we could have emphasized it anymore in meetings and on the field. I do not think we could have physically emphasized it anymore. If you guys had tape recorders at practice or in the meetings, it's just one of those things. I think you have to tip your cap to the Cowboys, they've got a lot of really good players. That's as good of skill group that you're going to face in the NFL and a quarterback that's a guy that's going to break tackles, too. You tip your cap to Dallas, they've got a lot of good players. There's certainly room for improvement. We missed far too many for the caliber of group that I think we have. A lot of it is just angles and timing. I think it's very difficult to simulate timing in practice when it isn't truly live to the ground. As much as you emphasize it, as much as you show film and you're watching people around the league, you study the Cowboys and all these guys, how they break tackles, how they make people miss what their running style is, until your body gets to physically perform that movement, it's difficult. So, I think you certainly saw that, but I will say, at the end of the game in that second half, I thought we tackled well. I thought in the two-minute we tackled well. (CB) Jalen (Ramsey) and (CB) Darius (Williams) had a couple really big tackles for us to keep the clock moving. I felt like we finished the game tackling better than certainly we started it."

**(On if the matchup against the Eagles offense can be the game where he can use his leverage of plays to his advantage and his thoughts on ILB Kenny Young's coverage skills)**

"Philly's two tight ends, I've got as much respect for them as a tandem, as anybody in pro football. (Eagles TEs) Zach (Ertz) and (Dallas) Goedert are as good as you're going to find. I've personally played against them twice. They're as good of a tandem in the run game and as in the pass game as you can find in the NFL. (Eagles Head Coach) Doug (Pederson) does a great job moving them around, creating formations that really try to create matchups for those two guys. So, we're definitely going to have our hands full with those two And (Eagles QB) Carson (Wentz) does a really good job locating and finding them. So, then to your point about (ILB) Kenny Young, I really liked the way he played on Sunday night. I thought that he brought a big presence to us. I thought that we felt like he could do it, but he really showed that, 'Hey man, this guy can play NFL linebacker' and there's room to improve for sure. But he gives us some athleticism and some size, a little bit longer guy. We're hoping for continued improvement from Kenny."

**(On what he does when he first enters the locker room during half time)**

"We get together as a coaching staff first. It's important for us to get together, give the players the time to catch their breath and then get connected as a coaching staff, make sure that we're connected on exactly what happened and exactly what we want to convey to the players, because you have such a short amount of time. So, time is of the essence. When we got with the guys, we knew exactly what we needed to correct. And it was really more from that the last drive of the two minute. There were a couple of technical things there that you wish we had back. But I felt like going into the second half, we had a good idea of how they were going to continue to attack us and then what we could do to give ourselves a real good chance to be successful moving forward. So, we kind of gave them a good preview of what the second half of may be like. Then I felt like the communication between players and coach and coach and player was really good throughout the whole game. Then particularly in the second half, we're able to get to things from a coverage standpoint, from a personnel grouping standpoint that I think allowed us to be successful down the stretch."

**(On what has been affective for containing Eagles QB Carson Wentz)**

“Well, the last time I faced Carson was 2017. He was by far the MVP of the league at that time when we played them in Chicago, they were really rolling. This guy's as good of a player that you're going find. He's big, much like Dak (Prescott), he can drive the ball at any part of the field, throwing it, athletic, he can create. I think that he's really physical for the position. I mean, this guy's 6-5, 235-240 (pounds). He's a big man. So, very similar players and they're both competitors. Much like Dak, Carson really shows up in the 'got to have it situations' – third-down, red area, two minute, very much like Dak. So, it's going to take a team effort to make sure that this guy doesn't have one of his best games because he's certainly capable of beating you at any time. You got to be on your game all 60 minutes or however long the game goes, because this guy's putting pressure on you every single snap. He's one of those quarterbacks that every single snap he's putting pressure on you. So, we're going to have to be able to operate at a high level.”

**(On if there are similarities between QB Jared Goff and Wentz)**

“I think where they're similar is that they can go and win any game on the schedule. I think they're quarterbacks that you would consider franchise quarterbacks that you can say, 'Hey, we can go into that game and win that game. If we're behind, if we got to come back, if we got to go on the road, we feel good about these guys, leading our football team.' I think that's where they're similar. I think their playing styles are different. Carson is a different stylistic quarterback than (QB) Jared (Goff) is, but they're both effective. They both have been winners in this league. They both have achieved a success leading their team into the playoffs. And certainly, in every game people are saying, 'Hey, you know, we got to make sure that, that guy we got a plan for him.' So, I think that's where they're similar. And it seems like both of them are just outstanding people and I think that that's probably where the similarities lie.”

**(On how he feels CB Jalen Ramsey performed in his defensive system against Dallas)**

“It's his defense, it's not my defense. It's all right. It'll never be a coach's defense. Will definitely always be the players' defense. That won't be the last time I say that, but I thought that (CB) Jalen (Ramsey) got better as the game went on. Like a lot of players. I thought he got his legs underneath him. I know that he told me after the game, he can play a lot better and I can coach a lot better. I think that all of us kind of had that same feeling after the game, but I thought in crunch time, he was outstanding. He had a couple of big tackles in the two-minute, had the big break up on (Cowboys WR) Amari (Cooper) on the third down. The thing that I thought he did a really nice job of is communicating from the very first snap to the end of the game. I thought that that was a real strength of his, but there's some plays that I know that he would like to have back. Some ops that I think he feels like, 'Hey, I can go finish that.' And either you make a big play on the ball or make or finish the tackle. So, it was good to get out there with him. He's really good on game day from a communication standpoint on the sideline helping the younger guys. So very pleased with him and then encouraged that we can get a lot better moving.”

**(On his thoughts about DL Aaron Donald making a big play on third down against Dallas while being double-teamed)**

“That was a big third-down-and-four. I think if you look even closer, okay, you'll see, (CB) Troy Hill behind (DL) Aaron, Donald too. And Troy Hill is the reason why Dak Prescott pulled that back. It was not Aaron Donald. Aaron's in the way and that's exactly what (Defensive Line Coach) Eric Henderson's teaching him to do, blocking shots. We feel like we can add that to his game. He's doing a really good job of it. He's done a great job in camp, but I think if you look even closer, Troy Hill was really why Dak had to pull that throw back and then I thought that (DT) Michael (Brockers) had a really good individual rush on that left guard. It was a tremendous individual rush. Michael's been working extremely hard on his past rush and I thought it came alive the other night. I thought that play was indicative of 11 guys doing exactly the right thing, playing with perfect assignment, technique and effort. That resulted in a big, third stop.”

**(On Fuller on the four-down stop)**

“He performed the right assignment, did it with the right technique. He knew that there was going to be traffic on that particular down and distance. It's a down and distance where things like that happen. He negotiated it, I thought smoothly and was able to make the play and finish it with a good tackle. Certainly gave us a big lift there for the rest of the game.

**(On if this past game performance will give them some optimism on how good they can get)**

"I think we're encouraged, but far from satisfied. I think certainly encouraged that we were able to finish the game. I think the second half was more indicative of how we expect to play. But certainly, through all four quarters, there's a lot to correct. I think that as a coach and as a player, as a competitor, we're all in this together. We know that there's a lot that we need to get going on and that's what makes competition fun is working at your game. Whether it's coach, player or as a unit we need to get back to work and that's why today's so important. Is that we can get back on the field and we can start that process. So, we're excited to do that here today."