



**Rams Offensive Coordinator Kevin O'Connell – Media Availability – December 4, 2020**

**(On what he says or doesn't say to QB Jared Goff after Sunday's game)**

"I think it's so much about what you don't say. I think (Rams QB) Jared (Goff) said a lot in response to that, as far as this week and how he's handled it. I've been really excited about his process and how he's come back with a ton of energy and focus this week. It's always going to come down to decision making and protecting the football. We've got to do a better job of that. He knows that and we're trying to implement different tactics to work through that throughout the practice week, while also still reminding him to be aggressive with the football. We want to take advantage of looks when they present themselves. But across the board, there's no question that it's a huge emphasis, continued as it always is, on taking care of the football."

**(On RB Cam Akers' development)**

"I just think his comfort level and the details, the small details of playing the position. When you're a team that runs the wide zone, we run different interior concepts, there's different nuances that go with reading those plays, with knowing the pace at which to hit some runs versus other runs. I think (Running Backs) Coach (Thomas) Brown has done a tremendous job with him. You just see the decisiveness and just the downhill feel when he sees things. Then just that physical finish. I mean, even after the 61-yarder, the next play to start the fourth quarter, he has another great run on just the downhill, double-team type play, where he's going to go almost finish right into the end zone. So, you start to see a guy get confidence. You start to see a guy hit a couple of runs like that, like (RB) Cam (Akers). We know the talent. We know everything about him is there. It's just a matter of, you know, seeing that switch get flipped a little bit. Runs like that get you real excited about Cam."

**(On if he thinks Akers could become the number one back)**

"I think, as all as we've said kind of all along, it's all those guys that have had their moments where they've really assumed maybe within a quarter, within a drive, whatever it may be, just keeping all those guys fresh has been huge for us. Really giving all those guys ops and then I think Thomas and (Head Coach) Sean (McVay) and 'Krom' (Run Game Coordinator Aaron Kromer), they do a great job when we do get a hot hand and going, trying to ride that guy and let him get into a rhythm, while also maintaining having the freshest back in the game at all times is a great thing as well. I think we've had a really good balance, but Cam definitely showed up in that last football game in my eyes."

**(On his happiness with his working relationship working with Goff)**

"Yeah, the relationship has been phenomenal. There's been times where, I for certain am always accountable to myself and making sure I'm doing everything I can to push him, to demand a ton out of him, prepare him for each and every football game. I think he still, over these last few games, he's still doing a lot of really good things, we just have to take care of the football. We have to make smart decisions and understand to play well at all three phases takes our offense, maintaining possession of the ball and allowing our team to play well, complimentary in all three phases. The big plays will come. The conversions, the completions, those will all come, but not at the expense of ball security and maintaining that. As far as coaching Jared, it's been a really great experience and I continue to enjoy it day in and day out because he pushes me to be a better coach, and I'm obviously trying to make him as best, the best possible version of himself. The last part of that is how do we make that as consistent as we possibly can moving forward."

**(On if there is a sense of urgency to win the division)**

“You feel the sense of urgency with every game now. The month clicks over into December and you start feeling, you can look at the season towards the last quarter of games here, you get into these last four or five games and really know the urgency is there. You can just take one blink at the standings and know there's a lot of teams that think they have an opportunity to make the playoffs. There's a lot of teams that feel like they're going to start playing their best football now in December. So the urgency to do that is obviously there and every team that as the season kind of winds down wants to make sure they're hitting their stride and playing their best at this time of year.”

**(On Goff's performance and consistency in handling the pass rush throughout the season)**

“I think you look at it a little bit more detailed in that as far as, okay, it's a four-man rush, but what kind of coverage is it? Is it zone coverage? Is it man coverage? Are they trying to double team one of our primary receivers? There's a lot that goes into it from what kind of a four-man rush is it, what's the coverage structure behind it, versus when they're bringing pressures and there's only six or five DBs or coverage players left. So there are really two different scenarios, but I think when teams are bringing four, it's just constantly that's when the discipline of the quarterback doing his job, snap in and snap out. Footwork, progressions, pocket movement, ball security within the pocket, all of those things get tested when they're seven or more sometimes in coverage and you may have to hold the ball or a number one may not be open. Progressing through the down, competing through the down all while maintaining that ball security is really what playing quarterback in the NFL is all about.”

**(On if Goff is trying to push it too much on decision making)**

“Just like touchdown passes can be celebrated and kind of overanalyzed sometimes, I don't think you can overanalyze turnovers too much. I think you can look at each one as its own. Each one has its own story and there's a lot that goes into each one sometimes. As far as Jared's ball security in the pocket, he did fumble when he was running the football. That was one thing that we pride all of our guys, whether it's a receiver, running back tight end, whoever it is with the ball in their hand, defensive players. We preach a lot about the fundamentals and techniques of being a ball carrier and there was a breakdown there and we put the ball on the turf and that cannot happen. So obviously, we work a ton from the pocket as a passer, but that switch needs to be flipped, you need to understand, I'm now a runner protecting the ball and trying to get what I can, but also protecting the football and myself. As far as the interceptions go, those are things where it comes down to, kind of what I was just talking about, that detail of what are the details of my job? Is it a drop-back pass, play action, a keeper, a screen, whatever it is. How do we maintain possession through my progression? And then obviously finishing the down, completing the ball, getting the ball thrown away, ending the down with possession despite maintaining that competitive kind of confidence to push the ball downfield and maybe give your guys a chance to win those contested catches. So it's a fine balance. You don't ever want to take away from a confident, kind of feel, player like Jared, but at the same time, we need to make sure that that decision making of when that ball leaves your hand, that it's going to be maintained in our progression as much as we can possibly control it.”

**(On what he told Goff after his fumble on his rushing attempt)**

“We talked about that as far as the situation, or the down. I think it was a, first-and-10, maybe a second down, it was not third down. The maintaining of our drive was not on the line with that play. We talked a lot about how they kind of ran up a game up front that forced, not an immediate pressure, but some push in the pocket. He was able to evade that with two hands on the ball and push up and out of the pocket. We did talk about maintaining those eyes, keeping them up, maintaining the progression if you're not under immediate duress, obviously with two hands on the ball to remain a passer. In my opinion, he's one of the better quarterbacks on the run, throwing the football in the league. We do it on keepers, we do it on designed bootlegs and roll outs, so no better time to continue to apply that skillset then when you do break contain kind of on an off-schedule play that he's demonstrated before he can make those plays and really put stress on the defense. So, a lot goes into it. It's our job to make sure we talk through it, prepare him and then make sure he's ready to go come Sunday in that next opportunity.”

**(On if he had a coach publicly stating he needed to take better care of the ball or criticizing him while he was playing)**

"I did. I think, you know, it's really easy to sit up and talk about leadership and accountability and leading from the front sometimes. But those moments where there's some adversity, and Jared would be the first one to tell you, he's got to protect the ball better. We're looking for some more consistency there. He's accountable to that and for our head coach to hold him accountable to that, for me to hold him accountable to that, Jared wouldn't want it any other way. I'm sure he said the same thing to you guys, as far as that only aides in his leadership ability to demonstrate, hey, I can not only get coached, but I'm going to go out and fix something that we want to put an emphasis on. That's always an emphasis. I think teammates will respond to that. I think they're responding to the way he's working at it this week, as he does every week. Now it's just about results. It's about going out, not really talking about it, we've done enough of that. It's about going out this Sunday and applying those things, playing consistent, protecting the football and leading us to a victory against a really good division opponent."