



Rams Head Coach Sean McVay – Media Availability – December 7, 2020

(On what he wants his team to concentrate the most on a short week)

“It’ll be the same things. It’ll just be an accelerated process. The difference between what you can normally do in a typical week, as opposed to a Thursday game is a real big emphasis above-the-neck. Obviously, this is a team that really stresses you and challenges you in all three phases. I have tremendous respect for the ability for them to really play complementary football, shift their identity to mold and to figure out how they want to try to win the football game. You’ve really seen that reflected each of the last couple of weeks with the way they played the Cardinals, with the way that they played the Chargers yesterday. It was a good win by our team yesterday, but it’s about being able to move on and kind of hit the reset button and have a great week of preparation. And a lot of that will be mentally and that’ll be the big thing for us.”

(On preparing for Patriots QB Cam Newton)

“He’s a guy that can beat you in a variety of ways. He is such a physical presence. I think, (Offensive Coordinator) Coach (Josh) McDaniels and (Quarterbacks) Coach (Jedd) Fisch have done an excellent job of being able to accommodate his skillset and make their offense mold to what he does best. That changes by the week based on how they feel like it’s the best way to attack the opponent. And certainly, that’ll present a great challenge for our defense, but looking forward to seeing how these guys answer the bell.”

(On if he knew QB Jared Goff would respond)

“We felt very confident in that and I thought he did a really good job. But I think what says as much as anything is there was a couple of things early on in the game that didn’t go exactly according to plan when we end up, you know, not converting on the third down, go forward on fourth down, but he just stayed nice and neutral, steady. I thought he played really well and I thought that his teammates around him did a great job. That’s something that we’ve got to be able to build on going against a really tough defense this week.”

(On his concern level over his special teams unit, especially facing the Patriots this week)

“I don’t want to say concern, I think you have a heightened sense of urgency. We know what we’ve got to be able to do. I think these guys (Patriots) clearly see the advantage that they’ve created. You go back to (Patriots Head) Coach (Bill) Belichick’s history, starting out as a special teams coordinator. The kicking game and the way that they create edges and advantages for them, has been something that I’ve always noticed from afar. And then, especially when you look at the game yesterday, that was a true winning edge that really turned the tables and in a lot of instances was a reflection of why the score was so lopsided. So, it’s definitely something that guys have to really be aware of. We’ve got to do an excellent job of trying to neutralize it and (Special Teams Coordinator) Coach (John) Bonamego and (Special teams Assistant Coach Tory) Woodbury and myself, we’ve got to figure out a way of getting guys in the right spots, understanding how to play well in really all the phases of the kicking game. And if we don’t, they’ll make you pay just like they did yesterday.”

(On if he is expecting anybody back from the short-term IR)

“I wouldn’t think so. I think the big thing is from an injury standpoint, (DL Michael) Brockers got a stinger yesterday. I haven’t had a chance to connect with (Vice President, Sports Medicine and Performance) Reggie (Scott) just because the treatments and things like that haven’t occurred quite yet. We’ll have an update for you guys tomorrow. He was feeling better, but in terms of what that means for his status for the game on Thursday, don’t really know. Other than that, it seemed like we were able to come out pretty clean, which is a blessing especially in these short weeks when you need everybody in all hands on deck.”

(On what he wants to see from Goff over the last four games of the season)

"I think consistency is the biggest thing. I know it's like a broken record, but it is the truth. If he plays like he did yesterday, that's indicative of really good quarterback play, exactly what we're looking for. I thought he got through progressions really well. There's a lot of things too, that don't show up on the stats for him that I think are a real reflection of playing well, and that's managing the run game. Some of the things where we were able to get some clean looks were a reflection of his command at the line of scrimmage and a lot of the things that we're looking for. So, there's so much that goes on from a mental perspective. I thought physically through football really well. I thought he made some accurate throws. I mean, I know only goes down as the 13-yard completion, but that throw and catch between he and (WR) Cooper (Kupp) with (Cardinals DB) Patrick Peterson, covering them in man coverage is about as high level of execution, just a good football play overall from offense and defense in terms of the level of competitiveness. But same thing that you saw from him yesterday. I want to just see him be able to consistently handle that. The things that we ask of him change by the week based on what the defense presents them. We know this is going to be a unit that applies pressure and being able to handle some of those different things is going to be critical for us. Confident that we've got to do a great job putting together a plan and then him digesting it and making it come to life on Thursday night will be something that is going to be a big part of how we handle this game and what ends up occurring as far as the result."

(On what he wants his entire team to fine tune over the final quarter of the season)

"I want to see us play complementary football. I was pleased with the offense and the defense. Clearly there's some things in the kicking game that we have to get better at. That's not a secret to anybody from yesterday. But the beauty of it is, is you get a chance on a short week to be able to respond. I always talk about the response, I think, any great competitor, anybody that's wired the right way can't wait for that next opportunity. Knowing that you can't get it right now, but what we do over the next three and a half days, if you will, is going to be indicative of the type of position we put ourselves in to have success. The teams that I think are going have the most success are the ones that are playing the best in December. It's all you can ask for is being involved in games that matter. Our guys have done a good enough job to put themselves in a position to be relevant right now, but it's only about what we can do this Thursday and see if we can go give ourselves a chance to get our ninth win and then have a couple of days of rest and come back for the last three (games)."

(On if he has been up all night)

"No. The Sundays wear you out a little bit. I tried to get some rest last night, got up early and got started. But it is a quick turnaround, but no excuses on my end. That would not be smart. I would be brain dead probably right after this call, if I didn't get any sleep. So got some sleep got up early this morning and looking forward to seeing if we can do a good job of starting this game plan off the right way."

(On how much he still thinks of playing the Patriots in the Super Bowl)

"Yeah, I mean clearly it was a big game. It was a something that didn't go according to plan. A lot of things that I know that you try to use to be able to learn and move forward from. But what I think the most important thing that you can apply is there's a lot of continuity on their coaching staff, same thing with ours. And you always look at that, because that was the last time that we played them. Specifically, when you look at just our offense and their defense. We've obviously got some different systems that were running special teams wise and defensively, but that's definitely relevant. It's something that you have to be aware of. You have to understand what the success that they had, that it's something that they'll probably try to replicate. We've seen a lot of those things each of the last couple of years, some of which we've handled really well and some of which we haven't. That's why you got to love the challenge. I know a Coach Belichick and his coaching staff do as good a job as anybody getting their guys ready to roll. I think they're playing their best ball as of late. And that's why it's going to be even that much more of a challenge for us this week on a short week."

(On where the Super Bowl ranks in his career moments)

"I mean, it's definitely something that is a big memory. You try to be able to move on. It was a very humbling night for myself, but you can't dwell on it. It's about how you move forward, how you transition. But I mean, that's the biggest game I've ever been a part of as a coach. I didn't think that I did nearly a good enough

job for our football team to give us a chance to be crowned world champs. But that really doesn't have anything to do with how you move forward into the next season or now two years removed from that. I think you've got to learn it as use it as a learning opp. That's what we've done. The 2020 season is totally separate from the 2018 season. I've been pleased with how we've handled some of the ups and downs. I like what we did yesterday as a football team, what we did yesterday, we won't have anything to do with how we play on Thursday, but we've got to have a great week of preparation this week."

(On if there is any special motivation towards this game against the Patriots)

"I mean, I would just say, I don't know if you look at it like that as much as it is about, 'Hey, let's get your football team ready to go. Let's have a great plan. Let's be ready to adjust and adapt accordingly' because the agility that they demonstrate as a football team is, is something that I think has been a real strength of theirs. I think that's something that we've gotten better at, but, you've got to put yourself in a position to have great preparation and make sure that you do a great job of trying to make good decisions that are in alignment with putting the players in good spots. I think that's the most important thing. Our guys have done a lot of really good things and looking forward to this week and it's a great football team and it's really well coached. So, I'm looking forward to seeing how the Rams play the Patriots, that's the most important thing. My job is to make sure that we, as a coaching staff, put together good game plans in all three phases and make good decisions as the game unfolds to hopefully see that result be reflected with all the things that are necessary to do that."

(On if he has an extended relationship with Patriots Head Coach Bill Belichick)

"Oh yeah. We stay in touch and I've got a relationship with a couple of coaches on their staff. It's such a small network of people, you're cognizant of there's a give and take. But what I think has been really cool about Coach Belichick, is his willingness to share. You can just see the respect and the history that the respect for the game and the history of the game that he has. I think a lot of where, kind of our initial relationship was struck up was because of the respect he had for my grandfather. He is a class act. He's been nothing but great to me. I'm very appreciative of that. I have tremendous respect for everything that he's accomplished. And as a coach, I have respect for this coaching profession and he's done it as well as anybody and really their coaching staff as a whole. So, we do keep in touch, but you know, this week we're looking forward to seeing if we can compete and put together a good performance that is indicative of two good teams going at it Thursday night."

(On the short-week preparation)

"It's a great challenge. Really what it ends up being is you've got to kind of combine the first three days of your preparation into one, if you will. You look at it as, today (Monday) is really a game plan day for the coaches. You let the players recover and do some things physically to recover, to get their bodies back. And then tomorrow (Tuesday) is kind of a combination of your Wednesday and Thursday, but it'll mostly be above-the-neck. And then Wednesday, is kind of wrapping it up with your red area and kind of putting together your all-encompassing plans. So, what it is, is a great challenge, especially in a short week, just in general, getting ready for anybody. But especially, a team like this (New England Patriots) that has the ability to morph their identity and has so many things that make the preparation a challenge. So, that adds to it, but it's also a good little motivation for us as well."

(On if any extra preparation was given to this game during the offseason or bye-week)

"it was a little bit harder in the offseason, just because this is so late. Typically, if you had it a little bit earlier, but there's been enough film accumulated that sometimes you really look at how teams shift and adjust their identity based on as the season unfolds injuries, things of that nature. But, a lot of our coaches have done a phenomenal job of getting ahead in terms of just the preparation with regards to reports, breakdowns, things of that nature. And that's where when you get up early this morning and you really start in on it, those guys had that done going back a week. So, a lot of coaches that have been a big-time contributors on our staff, that does not go un-appreciated by us. But, it does enable us to be able to accelerate the preparation that's absolutely necessary this week."

(On any hindsight about moving on from Falcons RB Todd Gurley II)

"Well, I mean, it was clearly not an easy decision. Like I've said before, (Falcons RB) Todd (Gurley II) was as instrumental and a lot of the success that we had for the first three years that I was here and I'm forever

indebted and thankful for the contributions he's made. I don't necessarily know if you look back on a good or bad, it was a very difficult decision as the way that I would look at that. I'm happy to see the success that Todd has had with the Falcons, not surprised. I have a great relationship with (Falcons Interim Head Coach) Raheem Morris and I know that they love him and everything that he's done and how he's showing up day-in-and-day-out and doing a great job for them. So, I wish nothing but the best for him and really got nothing but great things in terms of my feelings towards Todd."

(On if other teams have tried to emulate the Patriots using certain fronts or zone coverage)

"I would say it was a combination of both. We were such a heavy 11-personnel grouping and so it gave you some different things in terms of changing the math and the numbers. One of the things that I think does help, but certainly doesn't mean you have all the answers is you're a lot more multiple and some of the personnel groupings that we can activate. But, we've seen varieties. Everybody wants to talk about the 6-1 structure and some of the different coverage contours that they've played behind. That's something that we've definitely seen a lot of from a variety of teams. And like I mentioned, sometimes we've handled it well and sometimes not so much. It doesn't feel as foreign anymore where I think it was more than anything, when you're looking at it, felt so foreign going back to when we first saw it against Chicago, that (2018) season, there's a more of a comfort level in terms of the things that you like. But, they mix it up as well as anybody. You know, I wouldn't be surprised to see that. But there will be other front structures and different personnel groupings. I think that's what makes a (Patriots Head) Coach (Bill) Belichick lead defense so difficult to prepare for. You see that reflected in a lot of the people that kind of have extended out from a defensive perspective from that philosophy. So, we know it's going to be a great challenge. But, I would say it's really a combination of both the front structure and some of those coverages. Those are things that I think each of the last couple of years, there's a little bit more familiarity with it as coaches and players because it doesn't feel like it's an outlier. It's a normal structure and some of the coverage principles that you're accustomed to seeing very similar to kind of some of the things that we saw pretty regularly each of the last couple of years."

(On the offensive line given the absence of OL Andrew Whitworth)

"You know, you don't ever replace an (OL) Andrew Whitworth, but I think, (Offensive Line Coach/Run Game Coordinator) Coach (Aaron) Kromer, I've been really impressed with (OL) Rob Havenstein's leadership. I thought (OL) Austin Blythe has done a great job in terms of his above-the-neck communication. Those guys did a really good job. And I thought, especially where it was tough sledding. I thought (RB) Cam (Akers) did a great job of churning out some tough, hard-earned yards where you see he's a physical back. Really been pleased with what that group as a whole and I think that's going to be paramount for us to continue to have success down the stretch here. It was definitely a good performance to build off of what we know is going to be a great challenge this week."