



Rams Defensive Coordinator Brandon Staley – Media Availability – December 8, 2020

(On pivoting the approach from Cardinals QB Kyler Murray to Patriots QB Cam Newton)

“These offenses are so different, let alone the players. They're different players, but I think when it comes to this game, (Patriots QB) Cam (Newton) is as accomplished of a quarterback there is in this league. You're talking about a former MVP that's now playing for one of the great franchises in the NFL. So, you put those two together and you've got a winning formula, which is what has happened. Recently they've kind of hit their stride with Cam at quarterback. I think they're really finding their identity. The thing about Cam is wherever he's been, he's elevated the performance of the team that he plays for, whether it's in high school, junior college, college at Auburn, or going to Carolina. Then now in New England, he's fit in well with that group. He fits their style of player because he's an unselfish player that's tough. He's a winner and I think that (Patriots Offensive Coordinator) Josh (McDaniels) is doing a really good job utilizing his skillset.”

(On what he thinks the defense needs to improve on for the rest of the season)

“Yeah, I think in those ‘gotta have it’ situations, as these games mean more and more each week in December and hopefully longer than that, you've got to really show up in the situational part of the game. The red area, specifically two-minute in the game and at the half. We've had some really, really tough third-down losses down in the red zone. We practice it a ton, kind of had a similar story against Arizona. I know we can play better down there. We can finish better and then continue to thrive in two-minute situations, which I have been pleased with. But, when there's more at stake, especially against all the quarterbacks that were going to be defending down the stretch, we have to be at our best when our best is required in those ‘gotta have it’ situations.”

(On what he saw in DL Aaron Donald and CB Jalen Ramsey to design a system around them)

“These guys are rare players and they rare people. Rare competitors, both of them. Each in a unique way, their styles are different, but their play is the same. (DL) Aaron (Donald) is at the center of everything. He is truly in the middle of the defense and I think that that's where he's unique. He can impact the game on every snap. It's the one position on the field that you can't avoid. So, him being in the middle of things gives us an advantage. Then his versatility gives us an advantage because he can move around within the formation in our defensive front, whether that's in our run front or in our pass-rush front. I think that flexibility allows, not only for us to create more opportunities for him, but also create more opportunities for others and how that really helps us play complementary ball, like we want to be playing. Then his style of play, just his relentlessness, his competitiveness, his toughness, his instincts and his football IQ are off the charts. I think that's what really helps us, is that versatility helps us really play the way we want to play. Then this guy, his consistency and performance is as I've told you guys, it's just as good as it gets in all sports. We're just so fortunate to have him.

“As it relates to (CB) Jalen (Ramsey), I think you guys are seeing the impact that Jalen Ramsey has had on our defense and on our team. You've seen other receivers, that are high caliber players play against other teams and play a lot differently than they play against him. He's risen to the occasion against the premier players in this league and the way we've tried to utilize him is to be where the action is. I think that him being able to move right to left, outside to inside, has given us a great deal of flexibility. You talked about solar systems, the thing about Jalen is there isn't any responsibility on the field that he doesn't have command over. He's one of the smartest football players that I've been around and he's one of the toughest football players that I've been around. It takes a certain type of person to be able to go travel and do what he's doing because he's not just going to go cover a guy, he's going to play a lot of different techniques. You know the way we've been using him and I think that his plays speak for itself, in terms of the receivers

that he's been able to defend and also the opportunities that he's been able to create for others within our secondary. I think you've seen other players like (CB) Troy Hill, (CB) Darius Williams, (S) John Johnson (III), (S) Jordan Fuller, all these guys play better because he's on our team. That's the ultimate compliment that any player could receive, is that you make people better."

(On preparing for Patriots WR Damiere Byrd)

"This guy's got real deep speed. In the NFL on tape, it's very rare that a guy stands out where man, when he starts running, you notice. Certainly, he had a nice run there in Arizona and then New England capitalized on an opportunity to get someone that could stretch the field. So, we're definitely aware of his talents and he definitely has our attention. He's a really nice player."

(On any injury status update on DL Michael Brockers and OLB Terrell Lewis)

"It's day-to-day with him (DL Michael Brockers). I think we came out of that ok as you guys saw. Just real hopeful. He seems to be upbeat, but I think that's a day-to-day thing. And then same thing with (OLB) Terrell (Lewis). It's kind of a day-to-day operation right now and just seeing how he feels. But, feel good about him coming back at some point."

(On if Lewis could come back this week)

"It's day-to-day. It really is day-to-day and because of the limited practice time, it's going to be more towards the game-time type deal."

(On the development of LB Justin Hollins)

"(LB) Justin (Hollins) really rose to the occasion against one of the toughest guys that you can bring down. (Cardinals QB) Kyler (Murray) has really proven himself in this league and Justin has that range on the outside that we value. He can run and he's really smart. That sack on Kyler was reflective of a really detailed rush plan that we put together, spearheaded by (Outside Linebackers Coach) Chris Shula and (Defensive Line Coach) Eric Henderson. We knew that that guy, when he goes to his left, he's spinning out of there. If you knew how much that we were really emphasizing that, it's all that preparation, turning it into a game reality. I just can't say enough about Justin, can't say enough about Chris Shula, coaching him, getting him up to speed. We're going to need them to play like that and we expect them to play like that."

(On who will replace Brockers if he can't play Thursday)

"Eric (Henderson) does such a good job with that front. We have so many capable guys with (DL) A'Shawn (Robinson) coming alive and then (DL) Greg Gaines has played consistent football for us all year long. Then we've got a young stable of guys, (DL) Marquise Copeland, who we're a big fan of and others that can step up into that role. Certainly (DL) Aaron (Donald), (DL) Sebastian (Joseph-Day), (DL) Morgan (Fox) all those guys, we have a deep group. If 'Brock' can't go, then we'll hold the rope for him."

(On preparing for a constantly evolving Patriots offense)

"The way they play, it's just such a great compliment to their coaching staff. They figure who they have, and then they assess that game. How they need to play it and that's what the best teams and the best coaches do. They've been doing that certainly for a long time. I think that those are the offenses that are the most difficult to defend, that use all of their people and use their people to their strengths. So, New England plays a very complementary style in all three phases of the game. The one thing that you can count on them is that they're going to be tough and hard-nosed, physical group that plays really smart football and doesn't beat themselves. So, we'll have our work cut out for us on a short week against these guys."

(On preparing for the style of play that comes with Patriots QB Cam Newton)

"In the NFL, a lot of it is math defensively. When the quarterback is not a runner, you can play 11 on 10 and you have a numbers advantage. Just by that guy not being able to effectively run the football. But, when you have someone like Cam Newton, now it's truly 11 on 11. Now, it's more even money. The thing that they're doing an effective job of is they're using him as a runner in all situations, and that makes it even more challenging to defend as they do at first, second, third down. They do it in all field zones and when there is that threat for him to become as dangerous as a runner, as we've seen in the NFL I mean the last, however many years, how many rushing touchdowns the guy has and how physical he is, you really have to assess the team differently."

(On how preparing the secondary against being baited by Newton)

"Great observations. Team defense, I think that you have to play team defense versus this team because they're using all 11 pieces of their offense in order to engineer drives and engineer scoring. So, when you have to account for all 11 people on the field, it requires you to play as a team too, where you can't just focus in on, hey they have this chess, chess piece or two that we can really focus in on. We can really engineer our plan around them. They do such a good job of varying their groupings and giving you something that's game plan specific. Then certainly with Cam's ability to run the football, they're already a good running team, even if he was not a running threat. Then when you add him as a running threat and a passing threat, because we all know, this guy can really throw it too. So, I mean, I'm not confused about that. We're not confused about that. We just have to play as a team on Thursday night."

(On the main focus up front to limit the Patriots rushing attack)

"I think you hit it on the head there with the way they run the ball. They do it with variety. They can do it with the two-backs, smash-mouth football, using a fullback. They use two tail to tail backs in the game at times. Then they also can go one back and spread you out to run it, or they can go one back and run it right at you. They have the power running game that's going right at you, but they also have the perimeter run game that makes you defend the horizontal grass too. So, like I said, it's an 11-man operation. We're going to have to do it in a variety of ways and Josh (McDaniels) is doing a really good job, I think playing to the strength of that football team. It's going to be a big challenge for us."