



Rams Head Coach Sean McVay – Media Availability – December 28, 2020

(Opening Statement)

"Starting out, obviously the big news is (QB) Jared (Goff) did have that thumb surgery today. This was something that we had feared that he had a fracture to it after the game. Then late last night, after midnight, I actually got on the phone to talk to some of the doctors. I know he had consulted with his family, his agent. We talked about it and we felt like that was going to be the best thing to do for him and for our team. So, it's pretty amazing, surgery went well today. I spoke with Jared and got some screws put in there and he actually should be available if we're able to handle business, for the playoffs. Which is pretty amazing. Credit to how quickly you can turn these things around now. But I also think it's a credit to his toughness that he did pop that out and made a handful of throws afterwards and wanted to compete with his teammates. That's kind of where we're at. But that was not something when I spoke with you guys yesterday, that we had made that decision on. That decision occurred late last night, it was actually early this morning, technically. So, that's how we got to that. Then the other injuries, (RB) Darrell Henderson (Jr.) had a good high-ankle sprain. It's something that's going to need to get fixed. So, he'll obviously be placed on IR."

(On who will step in for QB Jared Goff this week)

"(QB) John Wolford will. John Wolford will step up. John's done a great job preparing himself all year. If you watch the way that he's worked at it, I know there's confidence from coaches and from his teammates and guys will need to rally around him. But we're excited about the opportunity that John will have to lead the offense this week."

(On if RB Cam Akers will be available to play this week)

"There's a possibility of that. He's really made great progress. I think even just looking at the way he was able to come back in the Jets game and I know (Vice President, Sports Medicine and Performance) Reggie's (Scott) been extremely impressed. He is a physically tough guy and so there is a possibility that we will get Cam Akers back this week."

(On how to prepare a quarterback for this first game considering the stakes)

"If you've watched the way that he's prepared behind the scenes, I think it's important he keeps his same rhythm and routine. Because I do believe he's put himself in a position, God forbid, if Jared were to come out, that he would have been ready to step in and do a nice job leading the offense. We're in the process of figuring the best way to maximize his skillsets. When I spoke with him earlier, I think it's important that he doesn't feel like he needs to change anything with his approach, because he's done such a great job in my opinion from watching with his process, with his weekly routine and rhythm. It's really just, you're going to get all the reps in practice and now looking forward to the opportunity that you have to compete with your teammates."

(On what specifically the process was to repair Goff's thumb)

"I don't want to get into any of those specifics. He did have it fixed. His hand came down over the top on somebody's helmet and the TV copy caught him when it kind of slipped out and he popped it back in. He was able to tough it out and continue to play. I had a little bit of dialogue with him during the game in the middle of a stoppage, but he felt like he could grip the ball well enough. That's why I think it is something that you want to be smart about. It's just really stabilizing that joint is probably the best way that I can articulate it. I get a little bit out of my area of expertise to go into anything more in depth than that. It is

something that it's not significant enough that it keeps you out for an elongated period of time. It's more about just stabilizing that thing. That's what the surgery was reflective of. That's also why he should be available as quickly as potentially a week from now."

(On if a follow-up surgery will be required for Goff)

"I don't believe so."

(On if he knows who performed Goff's surgery)

"Yeah, I do. Just standard operating procedures, that'll end up coming out, but I'll just keep that between us right now."

(On if there will be any attempt to sign another quarterback)

"So, (QB) Bryce Perkins will be ready to go. I'm not sure where we're at with that process, but we'll try to get (Broncos Practice Squad QB) Blake Bortles on the roster as well."

(On the mindset to approach the season without a veteran backup quarterback on the roster)

"The confidence in John. What he had shown with the opportunities – whether it be preseason, competitive reps in practice, all the stuff that you're just evaluating every single thing that he does. We felt good about that. So, really it was a reflection of the confidence in John. Looking forward to the opportunity that he'll have this weekend."

(On his evaluation of the offensive line during the goal line stop on Sunday)

"I think the O-line has played tough. I thought, credit to Seattle's defense, they did a nice job. They were really loading it up and playing pretty heavy. I thought the third-down-and-one stop on the sneak was something that was it was tough for us, because we've typically you get a ball inside the one we've been able to punch that in pretty consistently and regularly this year. It was really the first time that we had been stopped in that instance. That was where you come back and you try to hit a little bit something wider, but they did a good job having a heavy kind of loaded front structure and you've got to give them credit. They made a nice play there, but there's been some instances where they've done some good things. I did think we were able to get some good removal on some of our direct downhill plays where we got some positive hits. But ultimately, we didn't do enough offensively really each of the last couple of weeks to play winning football."

(On how he feels about the running game going into Sunday)

"Guys will be asked to step up, just like John will be (at QB). (RB) Malcolm (Brown) is a very reliable, trustworthy player that's tough and can do a lot of things for us. (RB) Xavier Jones will be asked to step up and potentially (RB) Raymond Calais. So we've got some other guys that (Running Backs Coach) Thomas Brown has really been developing behind the scenes that I know will be excited if their number's called."

(On how he would describe RB Xavier Jones' running style)

"I think he's a slash-type runner. He's a bigger body than what you think, but he's got the speed to be able to finish and naturally can work edges on guys. I think he is built for a lot of the things that we do specific to the zone-running scheme and really be able to press it outside in one gap at a time and put your foot in the ground. So, he did a nice job with the opportunities that we had to evaluate him throughout the course of camp. I think he's done a good job on the look teams. This week he'll get a chance to make some plays for the offense."

(On if the playbook will be shrunk for Wolford, or if there will be experimental plays to maximize his skillset and experience with RPOs)

"No. I think a big part of it, without getting into too many specifics from just a game-plan perspective, I do think there's a skillset and some things that maybe we can do with him. I do think you don't want to get too far away from some of the things that he's been repping, that he's been working, that if in the instance, Jared had to come out of the game, that he could seamlessly step in and you don't feel like you have to make an all-encompassing change. I do think it is important to always have some agility and flexibility specific to that quarterback and we'll definitely connect with him, making sure that we're identifying, all right, what are the ways that we want to try to attack a tough Arizona defense and how does that match up with

some of the things that he can do, whether that be what you had mentioned, or, maybe some things that are different than what we've shown on tape offensively."

(On former coaches describing Wolford as uncanny and ahead of his time and if that is something that he has seen)

"I have, yeah. He loves it. I mean, he eats it up. He does a great job. He's got a great feel. I think uncanny is a good way to describe it, in terms of just being able to recognize things, understand, based on only being able to play with 11 (players on defense), if these guys are there, then what's the potential of a certain blitz coming from this side and what are the tools that you can activate to get it picked up? Or what are the ways that you can do different things that make people pay? So, I think he's got great wide-field vision. I think he's got a great feel for the game and all those things that his coaches have said, we definitely feel that here as well."

(On how much having a veteran running back like Brown helps the situation with injuries at the position)

"Big time. Really that's what Malcolm has been for that group as a whole. He's so steady, so reliable. Really, he's capable of playing on all three downs and he's had a lot of production for us. His consistent demeanor, his approach, being a pro's pro, I think that's really set the tone for that room. I think that's why you've seen such great maturity and advancements in their games from Cam and Darrell. I think he's had a good influence. Obviously you've heard me talk a lot about Coach Thomas Brown and the influence he's had, but it'll be a big deal to be able to have Malcolm leading the way again this week. I know he's really been putting his arm around those younger guys and here comes an opportunity for them to potentially contribute this week."

(On what his emotions were like when he first heard Goff would have to be out for the first meaningful game in McVay's tenure as head coach)

"I think the first thing is, you feel for Jared, because I know he wants to be out there and what a big game this is. You could see how bummed out he was. That's your first emotion, is for the player and missing your quarterback, like you mentioned, that he's been the quarterback for every game that has been important to us since I've been here since the '17 season. Then the next thing shifts to, you do feel good about the confidence that you have in John and now really, putting your heads together with the other coaches and trying to figure out a plan that's in alignment with the best way to have some success offensively in what we know is a big time game and it's going to be important for us to get some good production going against a really high-caliber offense."

(On how much time Wolford spends throwing to first team receivers)

"He's gotten a lot of good work, especially when you do some of your group installs, or your routes on air. So, he has been able to establish and develop a rapport with those guys. To say that he's gotten the amount of work and reps that typically you allocate to what Jared ends up taking throughout the course of the week, that wouldn't be accurate. But I do feel like he's put himself in a position to feel confident in his preparation and the weekly rhythm that he's established. I'm confident that he'll perform well for us."

(On if it helps going against a team like Arizona that he knows pretty well)

"I don't know that it helps. I think this is a really tough defense. I think coach (Defensive Coordinator Vance) Joseph does an excellent job. I mean, the only thing I would say is, because there's not as much inventory from a film standpoint, because we played them so recently, I guess that minimizes the amount of things that you necessarily have to look at as opposed to if we hadn't played them. It's still going to be a great challenge. They do a great job of presenting a variety of looks that cause you problems, really in all three downs. So that's definitely something that takes a lot of preparation and a lot of detail, both in the run game and in the pass game."

(On how the team has rallied around Wolford)

"Anybody that's been around John, he's got a nice way about him, he's got a great charisma, a great presence, he's a fiery personality, but I think the way that he goes about his business week-in and week-out, day-in and day-out has earned the respect of his teammates. He's done a great job giving great looks for our defense all year. Then when he's had his opportunities to run our offense, I think he's done a really

nice job. A lot of those things kind of have been behind the scenes just based on the COVID restrictions and without the preseason. I think all those things have led to why he is revered by his teammates without a doubt."

(On if there was any other option for Goff or if he wanted to play this weekend)

"I think if you asked him, he definitely would have wanted to do that, but you've got to make sure that sometimes you help take the decision, or help paint a picture of why this is the smart thing for the longevity of your career and not just be so short-sighted. I know Jared would have wanted to do everything in his power to play this week, but I do think he would have wanted to do everything in his power to stay available, but I think also when you look at understanding just some of the parameters around, all right, let's get this in here, let's stabilize this and then you could potentially be ready as early as next week. I think that was what made it the most sound thing and then you always defer to the doctors and when you listen to these experts and you know, talking to Reggie or (Head Team Physician) Neal ElAttrache and some of the other doctors, that was what they felt like was best and that's where you let the experts be the experts and trust their judgment."

(On if OL Rob Havenstein sustained an injury in last night's game)

"He had a little bit of a stinger, but it wasn't anything concussion-wise. Nothing that should restrict him moving forward into this week."

(On his message to keep the team motivated despite the current circumstances)

"I think the message is don't be afraid to put yourself out there and give it everything that you have. Even if it doesn't work out, because at least you'll have no regrets. I think it's important to take into perspective a week and a day ago we were feeling pretty good, we were at 9-4. A couple of games later, because of a couple of different things that could go either way, you're sitting at 9-6. We'll never make any excuses for how we got here, but I also think you have to be careful to let the outside-in narrative shape the way that our guys are feeling about their ability to go perform. Look no further than some of the resilient responses from some of the other teams. You look at what the Steelers did on a short week against an excellent Indianapolis Colts team. They start out at 11-0, they have a couple of tough games that aren't really characteristic of what they had been, they found a way to respond. They went behind in that game as well. So, there's examples of that. I believe in this team. I trust in their mental toughness and I think that the overarching message is let's put everything that we have into this. Let's not be afraid to put it all out there one more time. Get back up off the mat and keep swinging and have no regrets no matter how this thing ends up."

(On how Wolford was as Cardinals QB Kyler Murray on scout team and who has Wolford best replicated as a scout team QB)

"I think he's done a great job really giving a great look all season. Some of the things that our defensive coaches are looking for are reflective of personifying the identity of that offense and that quarterback (that we're playing). He's done a really good job of giving those looks. He's similar in stature to (Cardinals QB) Kyler (Murray) and all those kinds of things. He did give a great look the last time we played them. I don't know that any week stands out more so than the other. I think he's just done a great job all year of providing a great look to our defense. That's the thing that I would say is what has been encouraging, is that he's run a bunch of different types of plays, he's tried to mimic and emulate a bunch of different types of great players that play the position at a high level in some different ways. That's where those guys have said they have confidence in John based on seeing those things because you can't fake it and those guys really know."

(On clarifying if Sunday's starting quarterback will be Wolford followed by Perkins as backup and Bortles as a third option)

"Yeah, that's a possibility. We'll be able to use the standard elevation on Bryce Perkins, as opposed to the 53 (man roster). Then we'll have a spot to give dependent upon whether you look at putting Darrell Henderson on IR and some of the other things that we have. So, that's where we'll end up gaining that spot back. That's the plan, and we'll see. I know there's some different restrictions and I know we're in the process of that with Blake, but we do have John and Bryce in house right now."

(On if Perkins will be backup QB against Arizona)

"We'll see. I mean, we're looking at him as a quarterback that we have and that we can potentially activate. John is the guy. Then you want to make sure you have some insurance policies with Blake and at least his experience and familiarity with some of the things verbiage-wise and his experience in the system. But Bryce has done a nice job and as of right now, that's if we were playing this instance, Bryce would be the No. 2."

(On if OL Andrew Whitworth will be activated next week if the team makes the playoffs)

"That's the plan. We're going to activate him, where he has the 21-day timer starting this week. So, we'll get him on the practice field. Then next week ends up being the target goal, if we're fortunate enough to be sitting here playing then."

(On what it's been like navigating the past 24 hours and the mental gymnastics of it)

"It's a challenge, but it's part of the job. I think this year, you have a lot of different things that you're trying to work through, but that's what comes with the territory. I think you have to embrace it. You have to handle it just one thing at a time and kind of just check those items off, but make sure that you prioritize and attack. That's where we're at. The thing that I would say is the most exhausting if you allow it to be, is just how much we put into these games and then we haven't gotten the result each of the last couple of weeks. It's about, like I had mentioned earlier, you get back up and you go put everything that you have into it this week. What that looks like in terms of having to navigate through the inevitable injuries or COVID, whatever it is, you have to handle it and we're not going to make any excuses. We have to be ready to go this week."