



Rams Head Coach Sean McVay – Media Availability – December 30, 2020

(On what went into the decision today to only have the walk-thru and not practice)

"It being Week 17. That's really it. This typically is representative of – we'll get some extra work in, in terms of the timing and rhythm, but you look at overall for our team, the above-the-neck emphasis was what we thought was the important thing. You still get a lot of reps, a lot of things that are reflective of what we've done each of the last handful of years. Then Thursday and Friday, we'll be able to get the physical work in. It's not like that (QB) John (Wolford) or in some of these other guys that are being asked to step up, have not been getting physical reps throughout the course of the season. So, that was what went into that decision."

(On updates on what is going on with WR Cooper Kupp)

"We placed him on the COVID IR. That's really all I can say about that. His status for the game, he's probably not likely to be available for us."

(On if anyone was unable to practice or will anyone's status change due to the COVID protocols)

"No. Well, that will be to be determined, I guess I should say. There's so many different things that you have to work through with the contact trace, things like that. A lot of that stuff that's going on behind the scenes is something that I'll be able to update you guys. I'll be better equipped to update you tomorrow."

(On if there was nothing new on the injury report today)

"Correct."

(On ILB Micah Kiser activating to the active roster)

"Yeah, it was kind of a semantics thing if you left them off of it. He's a guy that we obviously have intentions for a real bright future with us. I don't anticipate him being ready to go this week. It was more semantics than anything else, so that you didn't have to go through some things if you didn't activate him at this point, being the last week of the regular season."

(On if anyone tested positive today for COVID)

"I'm not able to say that kind of stuff."

(On understanding that he can't name players but if someone did test positive, if he was able to say)

"I cannot say that. You'll find out tomorrow. This COVID thing is killing me. I can't say. I really can't. Like I can't tell you about this kind of stuff, and it's not because I want to withhold information from a man, you know that man, I'll help you out. It's really just a HIPA and all those kinds of things. I'm kind of just staying within my area here."

(On if a player or staff member tested positive today, if he couldn't name them)

"Yes. The answer's yes."

(On how not having WR Cooper Kupp could impact the receiving corps and the offense)

"Yeah, I mean, anytime that you're missing a player of his caliber, that's tough. The good news is, we've got a lot of guys that are still available that have played in really significant games and been big*time factors, whether it be in the pass game, competing without the ball from our skill players. We've got a group of receivers. (WR) Robert Woods has been outstanding in a variety of roles. (WR) Josh Reynolds has played,

started in a Super Bowl, in a Conference Championship, made huge plays as has (TE) Gerald Everett, (TE) Tyler Higbee. (TE) Johnny Mundt's been in meaningful games. You look at the emergence of what (WR) Van (Jefferson)'s done. Really, Van would be on the field a lot more if it wasn't for the confidence in our top-three guys. So, it's really tough, but I think what we feel good about is the ability for those guys to have prepared for their opportunity and potentially be ready to roll and get some more chances this weekend."

(On what Wolford's day was like today)

"I thought he did a nice job – great communication, great command of what we're trying to get done. Great understanding and ownership of the initial parts of the game plan. I think that's really important, because it starts with that quarterback then being able to echo and articulate it in the huddle with the other 10 guys and he did a really nice job and it's a good start to the week, but that's been consistent with John's rhythm and routine. That's the one thing is, the best part about the opportunity that he has this week is, you tell him you don't change anything that you've done, you're just going to get more opportunities on the practice field. But his process with what he's established, in terms of getting himself ready to go, he's as disciplined as a guy as I've been around in terms of having that rhythm, that process, that routine that's in alignment with getting yourself ready to go and today was a reflection of the start of that for him this week, which has been how he's done every week."

(On if OL Andrew Whitworth is on track to play this week)

"I don't think so. I would say, he did a good job getting out there today, moved around, looked good. But I would say that'd be doubtful at this point, but you don't want to say there's no chance."

(On updates with RB Cam Akers)

"(RB) Cam Akers, gave him another rest day. I mean, this guy is making great progress and we'll still see, his status is uncertain. I mean, you guys saw what I did a couple of weeks ago in the Jets game. I wouldn't bet against this kid."

(On what he likes about RB Xavier Jones and how he fits into the offense)

"I think he can do a nice job. You guys saw in some of the scrimmage settings, he did a really good job. I think he levels runs off, he's got great contact balance and he's got some nuances to his game as well, where it's not exclusive to just as a runner. He can make plays in both phases and I think he's kind of got that slash-running style that is a good fit for some of the things that we can activate. He did a nice job today. He's done a nice job really all year and he is a guy that if called on, we would have confidence to contribute and do some good things for us on Sunday."

(On how he balances not shrinking the offense too much, but giving Wolford enough to go out there and perform)

"Yeah, I think that's something that we're working through right now, but John's not limited in anything. He can activate all phases of our offense and we're excited about what he's going to do for us."

(On how much his belief in Wolford has to do with the fact that he reminds him of when he was a quarterback)

"Listen, I'm coaching for a reason. I think in terms of just the competitor, the focus, the concentration, the way he goes about his business, that's what you like as a coach. But I'm not as talented as these guys. That's why I'm coaching."

(On being confident in Wolford)

"Oh yeah. I'm confident in John Wolford. I'm confident in John, I'm also confident in the other 10 players around him and understanding what guys need to do to step up. We've got to go do it and we've got to go do it collectively and together. But man, what a great opportunity to respond and let's go lay the chips out there and see what the heck happens."

(On with the limited personnel the tight ends might be more involved)

"Yeah, that's possible. I think we'll have to see how we want to put together the entire game plan in all the different phases, but there's a possibility there. Kind of like I said, when Cooper went out a couple years ago you saw Robert Woods be able to have some position flex, Josh Reynolds can play either spot and

then, the confidence in Van Jefferson is a good thing. You're never going to replace a player of Cooper's caliber, but we do have capable guys to be able to step in and move around accordingly. That might mean tight ends getting some more work, but it also might mean you see more of Van Jefferson and some of those things."

(On how he may utilize Wolford's skill set in the offense on Sunday)

"I think John has a good skill set. I think you always want to make sure that you have some flexibility to what these guys do, but you don't want to get too far away from what you've done, especially being considerate of the other 10 players around him. We'll see how everything comes together. I do think John's got a skill set that will be fun to watch him execute our offense and how things come to life differently. Each guy has a creativity to his game, but I think he'll do a nice job kind of distributing and making good decisions. We'll see exactly what that looks like on Sunday."

(On why he has had success throughout his career against Arizona)

"I think this is a really good football team. I think (Cardinals Head Coach) Kliff (Kingsbury) has done an excellent job over the last couple of years. You can see (Cardinals Defensive Coordinator) Coach (Van) Joseph does a great job with the defense and they're playing really well right now. They did a great job against Philly and the Giants. The Niners are a tough team and they had a good battle it was back-and-forth, comes down to a one possession game. We certainly know what kind of team the Niners are capable of being. So we know that we're going to have to be at our best (against Arizona). They've got great players and they're very well coached. It is a different outfit but every single year is different. Every game is different, but you know what you got to be able to do and that's going to be being at our best this week to be able to get our 10th win and try to punch our ticket. They're trying for the same thing, so it's a big-time game."

(On if he will review how Wolford calls the plays to ensure it is how it needs to be called in the huddle on Sunday)

"I think that's always a big part of it. He's really good about getting that deliberate practice, even if he's not the one saying it in the huddle. When Jared has been available, he's kind of taken those reps off and saying it to himself. He's really able to visualize things, he's got a great way about himself in terms of just his presence in the huddle. I thought he did a really nice job. You'll definitely spend some extra time with him, but that's usually reflective of what you do with Jared on any given week. You spend a little bit of extra time with John, just making sure his comfort level saying some things and just going through that repetition because, like we've talked about, that's always the mother of learning. He's done a good job of stealing reps, even though it might not be the exact one where you're saying it in the huddle. He's making sure that he's getting his reps off to the side with that process and that rhythm that I talked about. I think that's why he's well equipped to step in and do a nice job."

(On if Wolford's mobility adds to what the offense could do on Sunday)

"Absolutely. His athleticism is definitely a trait that's helpful and it's not even necessarily, it's more some of the stuff that can come alive outside the framework of a play. Those are things that I think you see different guys do. I think you've got to kind of just let the game come to you, operate accordingly and then pick and choose your spots and be decisive. I think that's something that he's always done a nice job of when I've been around him is being decisive, trusting what he's seeing. Whether that's letting things go or whether that's taking off. It'll be something that I'll be interested to see how the game unfolds."

(On how much input Wolford will have in the creation of a game plan for Sunday)

"You really talk to them, you get a feel for what he's comfortable with and what he's seeing on the film. It's a collaboration with myself, him (Offensive Coordinator) Kevin O'Connell, (Pass Game Coordinator) Shane Waldron and (Assistant Quarterbacks Coach) Liam (Coen). There's a collaboration and John's got a great grasp of what we're trying to get done. He understands some of the things that we potentially want to activate versus the looks. Like you mentioned, it's a collaborative process and what he likes is usually what we like."

(On his excitement for Wolford's opportunity on Sunday)

"That's what you love about the opportunity and what a blessing it is to be able to coach in this league is to get a chance to work with guys like this that have performed and really put themselves in a position that if this opportunity arises and presents itself, you want to do everything in your power to help them be successful. I think anybody who's been around John Wolford, this guy, I mean, if you don't like him, then something is probably wrong with you. Guys respect the way that he's gone about his business, what he stands for and what he's about day-in and day-out. I tell the guys all the time, 'Those who know, know.' The people in our building, they see what he's doing, he's earned their respect. Now we get an opportunity for him to go play. I think that's it's a collaborative effort of everybody putting your best foot forward and trying to make sure that you help him and support him. I'm looking forward to seeing him lead the way this week."

(On if he has gone and watched tape of Wolford's collegiate career)

"Oh yeah, we've seen those. He's got highlights to watch depending upon which one pops up first on the YouTube. I think he's got a good inventory of different things that he's done both collegiately and then professionally in the AAF (Alliance of American Football), where there's a lot of guys that had played in this league. You can kind of still see some similar concepts that you want to activate. Really, it's more about just seeing what he's done and then what that means as far as what we activate. It's to be determined."

(On when was the last time he played on a scout team during practice)

"My true freshman year at Miami of Ohio, I emulated Josh Cribbs when we played Kent State."

(On the challenge of being a scout team quarterback and having to emulate different styles of opponents each week)

"I think it is different. The one thing is the cadence control, especially in a year where guys are always on their verbal cadence, just because of the fan situation. Their mannerisms, the different types of things that they activate in their system. John's really done a nice job giving a bunch of different looks and trying to really put the defense in position to be ready week-in and week-out. That identity can shift week to week, but he's really done a nice job. I think specifically when you look within our division, with two out of the three divisional opponents being really good, mobile guys that can beat you with your arm, your legs or their brain, they can beat you in the pocket, out of the pocket. That's why (Cardinals QB) Kyler (Murray) and (Seahawks QB) Russell (Wilson) are such good players."

(On what it says about Cardinals Head Coach Kliff Kingsbury that three quarterbacks he coached could appear in the NFL playoffs)

"I think Kliff does a good job. I think he's able to identify some of those guys. I can remember even just talking to him a while ago before (Chiefs QB and former Texas Tech QB) Patrick (Mahomes) had really lit it up with his opportunity in Kansas City, he saw those things coming. I know how hard he and (Cardinals General Manager) Steve (Keim) were working before they truly drafted Kyler (Murray). I just think he's (Kingsbury) just got a good feel from playing the position for what it looks like and how to develop those guys. It's why Kliff is such a good coach. Obviously, we have a relationship, but I can separate those things and be able to just say, 'Hey man, you can't help but respect what he's done.' Even going back to when he was with (Johnny) Manziel in college and some of the success he had going back with Case Keenum. You look at where he's been, and the consistent theme is quarterbacks playing at a high level. There is some flexibility with figuring out, 'What do they do best and how can I adjust accordingly?' I think that's what good coaches do. I think that's a real positive reflection on why Kliff is such a good coach."

(On if he was involved in the decision to sign Wolford when the AAF shut down and what the organization liked when it signed him)

"We had brought him in with a couple other guys that had NFL experience, or guys that were high priority college free agents. You could just see the way the ball jumps out of his hand. Just the upper and lower half movement. He's a twitchy athlete, I thought he did a really nice job in his workout and you're out there and you're thinking, 'Man, I don't care what the size says, this looks like it's supposed to in terms of the base, the balance, the body position and being able to speed it up at the top.' I was at that workout and he definitely earned his spot based on how he performed. He's just continued to stack blocks day-in and day-out. This is the first chance that he's going to get, and we're excited for John."