



## **Rams Head Coach Sean McVay and General Manager Pre-Draft Media Availability – April 27, 2021**

### **(Opening statement)**

**McVay:** "All right, I'm sure the first question is why the heck are me and (General Manager) Les (Snead) are at our houses and you guys are at the Draft House. Long story short, we had a person that got COVID that Les and I were both close contact traces with. Wanted to be smart. Neither of us is affected by this, but just following the protocols. We wanted to be smart and hopefully as long as we remain asymptomatic and our tests come back negative, which that's what has occurred over the last couple of days, we'll be able to have fun. And maybe I'll be able to take my shirt off when we draft like (Cardinals Head Coach) Kliff Kingsbury said. But other than that, hopefully you guys are enjoying that."

### **(On if McVay and Snead have taken COVID tests with negative results)**

**McVay:** "Yeah, that's correct."

### **(On when they became aware of being a close contact)**

**McVay:** "That happened yesterday."

**Snead:** "More tests to come."

### **(On the protocol to resume in-person):**

**McVay:** "I think the bottom line for us and really, it was more of a let's be smart, let's be safe, let's take the next couple of days to ensure that up until, and really through Thursday, everybody remains asymptomatic, their tests come back negative. As long as that's the case then we'll be able to get it going on Friday. Don't expect much action from us on Thursday, unless we maybe trade up into the first round, which knowing Les and the Rams, you never know, huh Les?"

**Snead:** "Yeah. I hear there's a few picks for sale. The Falcons and maybe we move up to (No.) four? See what happens."

### **(On if they will not be at the Draft House on Thursday regardless of negative covid results)**

**McVay:** "The plan is Friday will be the first day that I'll be there."

### **(On what the Rams will be looking for when drafting in the second round)**

**McVay:** "You know the answer to that. I won't even have Les waste his time with that. Come on, now. You're better than that. (laughs)"

**Snead:** "How do I answer this to try to be interesting too. I think like we have in the past, we try to work and figure out which players at what positions might be in and around, as we've said, 'Swimming in the in that part of the pool,' is a little bit harder to do, easier said than done sometimes. You somewhat got to wait and see how the draft unfolds and as it gets closer to (No.) 57, at that point in time, you can get a feel for what positions, there could be a run on certain positions and you can manage the strategy from there and whether, 'Hey, do you go grab somebody? Do you wait and catch whoever falls, or do you move back and try to grab another apple?' But at the end of the day, we've tried to prepare for as many scenarios as possible. But really, you're looking at probably multiple players at multiple positions because there's 56 at this point in time, 56 teams get to get a say before we do."

### **(On if there was passion from scouting staff about prospects worth making trades for)**

**Snead:** “We got a new term in the building thanks to (Defensive Coordinator) Raheem Morris the magic of Raheem Morris, obviously you all probably interviewed him. So, very passionate, vibrant, brings energy every day. He definitely termed a new term and probably a new grade that will implement it's called the 'Pool party grade,' so at that point in time, if there's a few players at a few positions and I know he's on the defense side of the ball, but I know the offensive staff joined in as well. But there's a there's a few players that maybe as Raheem termed it, we'd have a pool party, if they fell and we were able to grab them. But to be determined, to be continued. But we'll see.”

**(On if discussions have taken place about trading back)**

**Snead:** “Right now, the answer is, we GMs start talking this time of year. The answer is a yes on a few. Historically, when you're picking 57th, a little late in the second round, at the end of the day, there's a supply and demand factor that comes into it. But historically those picks have been traded often because a team that may be sitting in the third round maybe has more capital, wants to move up just to jump a few teams. So, I do think the exploratory talks will continue between now and then. But again, could happen a lot on Friday, but I think at that pick right there, there will be not to be teams behind us that a player falls to that pick and they want to go get him. That's kind of how that those economics work.”

**(On if there is a player on the roster to take over at center)**

**Snead:** “I think we've definitely discussed some internal candidates. I'll let Sean, if you want to follow up on that. And yeah, definitely like every draft, we evaluate the center position and try to stack those players as best as possible. But Sean, you might elaborate on our discussions from within.”

**McVay:** “There's absolutely candidates in our building right now. (OL) Brian Allen is a guy that started at the center position. (OL) Coleman Shelton and then we've got starter caliber guards. Guys that have started at guard that absolutely have the position flex. So, one of the things that we've tried to do over the last couple of years is really have some position flex, especially with those interior players. But, definitely have more than enough guys in house and it's that's something that we feel really confident about.”

**(On the Rams position surrounding the first round of the draft)**

**Snead:** “It's a good question. How do you answer it? I mean, I think the first round is obviously a place where there's some talented players. I think based on kind of where we've been as a team, where we've been consistently picking since Sean has been here, we've been able to win some games, contend for the division, advance to the playoffs – you're picking later. So, even when Sean and I did have a first-round pick, a couple of years back, we did determine instead of picking at (No.) 31, it might be better to move back and collect capital. So, right now in this phase, we've determined to use those picks in a creative way to maybe go get some more known players that can come in and help us right now with less projection and development. Or we've used that pick to add draft capital to get, let's call it instead of just one player, maybe two or three. So, it has been a while. It's a fun place to pick and it's even fun when you're, let's call it, one of our former teammates, (Lions General Manager) Brad Holmes, and (Lions Assistant General Manager) Ray Agnew, it'll be fun watching those guys when it's been a long time since we've picked, let's call it top-10, and you're in that pool. That's definitely a different swimming pool than we've been swimming in lately.”

**(On how much COVID has impact player evaluation)**

**Snead:** “I think it has impacted the process. I don't know if the process has been more in, maybe let's call it, when certain data comes across your desk or is made available, right? Instead of having a lot of workout numbers at the combine in the middle of February, if you're looking for the LSU linebackers' numbers, you didn't get them until yesterday. So, there's been some delay gratification in that type of thing. I know (Vice President, Sports Medicine and Performance) Reggie Scott's been a huge, let's call it organizer, logistics, idea person in getting the medical situation where it was a little more consolidated. I know that's been probably a logistical nightmare if you say it. So, at end of the day, there's been impact. But I'm not sure it's been an impact where you can't draft, you can't draft successfully. And I'm not sure there's really been much of an impact other than when information is gathered, collected and when you're able to analyze it.”

**(On the decision to sign WR DeSean Jackson)**

**McVay:** “I think first of all, the history that I have with (WR) DeSean (Jackson) and talking through some of the things that we felt like would help add to our offense – really smart, explosive player. I know he's had

some injuries over the last couple years. But we are confident in his ability. I mean, you even look at the impact that he has – he comes off the broken ankle, has an explosive, long touchdown where he's just floating past Dallas late in the year, I want to say it was in late December. So, he brings an element to our offense where he adds to an already really solid receiving group with (WR) Robert (Woods) and (WR) Cooper (Kupp), kind of headlining that group. Really ascending player and (WR) Van Jefferson and what the different amount of personnel groupings that you want to activate, being able to have four and five guys that you feel like can make major contributions from the receiver room is something that we valued. He's known for the ability to stretch the top shelf of the defense and create an add to some of those explosives. But it certainly isn't exclusive to that and being able to come back home and the experience. There was a lot of things that led to it being something that we were excited about the possibility and fortunately we were able to get it done and real credit to (Vice President, Football Business and Administration) Tony Pastors for being able to figure out a creative way to add a player of his caliber."

**(On Snead's perspective on identifying Jackson as the guy that could fill the deep-threat role)**

**Snead:** "Well, I think there's two ways you can do it – you can go to our film and you can sort by, let's call it big plays and explosive plays over the last few years and watch all of those and go, 'Okay, even though he's an older gentleman, he can still roll' and you can tap into some of your next gen stats and go, 'Okay, yeah, he's still running with the young guys.' so I guess some people were born to run, but he's a pretty simple 'eval' (evaluation) based on the resume that he's put on film, on ESPN highlights, on the grass over the years. So, jacked to have him."

**(On what it's like between McVay and Snead when they're in the draft room together)**

**McVay:** "I think one of the things that Les and I have always, really had such a good rapport, is I think we see the game through a very similar lens. Even going back to when I first got the opportunity to interview for the job, I remember feeling an instant connection in terms of the things that we valued, what it looked like to operate really in all three phases – offensively, defensively, and in the kicking game. Really, I respect the work that he puts in. You can feel the way he's studying it. He loves football. He's passionate about that. And so, I think as with any good relationship, the more that we've worked together, the more I appreciate the rapport and the consistent communication and dialogue and I think as much as anything is, there's a comfort in being able to maybe not necessarily always agree, but being able to come to an agreement that, 'Hey, whatever decision we make, we're making these decisions collectively.' It really hasn't happened often that we don't see it through the same lens. I can't think of many times, and that's something that you don't take for granted and I think it's a real credit to the way that he approaches it. I think just the natural rapport that's kind of always been existent between us, where you've got a good feel for one another and just good overall chemistry."

**Snead:** "It's interesting. Our roles are reversed, It seems like during the season it may be a calming presence for Sean and then I mean now maybe he gives me that look and interestingly again, it's a little similar to maybe calling a game, but Sean can be a very calming presence for myself. It's been awesome partnering with him and the staff and there's this chemistry and want to have seen him fall through some instances of what we're looking for in football players and then working with his staff on skill sets, at what specific positions, in what role can help the Rams and that's what we're going to try to attack on Friday and Saturday."

**(On when looking at the Rams NFC West rivals, what are you seeing in terms of what they've done so far this offseason and what they could do in the draft)**

**Snead:** "I mean, from a big picture, it does seem like we're all probably aware of kind of the window we're in. We're all trying to, let's call it get an edge on one another and that being said, we're all being aggressively aggressive in the way we're trying to get an edge on each other. So, I think it's a competitive league. It's a very competitive division and each team is definitely well coached, has really good players and we're all trying to maybe stay ahead of each other as best we can and as aggressively as possible."

**McVay:** "I think a lot of the same. I mean, I think the main focus is always about, kind of looking at ourselves. But you definitely want to be mindful of those matchups and those things that are going to be really important because the first goal that you have every year is going to be to try to win a division. So, I think you closely look at different things that each of these teams is doing, and what do we feel like is the best way to present

and pose matchups that are favorable for us, so that ultimately when you see these teams twice a year, you give yourself a chance to be able to create those edges, because it's such a small margin for error in this league, but it's a really competitive division. They do an excellent job, all three of those teams. And so, for us, our focusing concentration is on building this team the right way, doing a great job with the offseason program that's now in the second week and you definitely keep an eye on it, but our focus and concentration is on ourselves right now."

**Snead:** "I wanted to just clarify too. I think the teams, what everyone's doing is not necessarily just to beat one another, it's to, let's call it, contend in that division and go on to maybe bigger things. So, I know Sean alluded to that, but that's what I was trying to say. The moves being made weren't just to go 6-0 in the division per se."

**(On the offensive line and Offensive Line Coach Kevin Carberry's thoughts on the format and schemes)**

**McVay:** "That's all we've been doing for the last couple months. I think it all starts with how do you make sure with what we have, what do we want to be? And then how is that going to express itself as we get on the grass and get a chance to work with these players. But there will be a lot of continuity that we'll be able to keep. I think the best thing that happened to us that was kind of a blessing in disguise, going back to a couple of years ago was the depth that we were able to develop with a lot of different guys being forced to play earlier than maybe we ever anticipated. I think last year we saw the benefits of that and then I think really going into this coming season, you've got a lot of depth with guys you feel really good about that have some position flex. I mean, seeing (OL) Bobby Evans start at guard, at tackle, you've seen (OL) David Edwards and (OL) Austin Corbett both start at the left and the right guard spots. You've seen (OL) Joe Noteboom start at the guard spot and the tackle spot. And so, that position flex is something that's extremely valuable and beneficial. I'll tell you what's been really helpful is (Offensive Line Coach) Kevin Carberry, the mastery that he's had from recruiting and a lot of the crossover with whether it's Pac-12 guys, or even just when you're looking at a lot of these linemen now that are coming out, he's got a great command of this draft class because he was at Stanford for three years. I've really, really enjoyed working with him and the rest of our offensive coaching staff and Les and his group and collaborating and kind of understanding, 'All right, where are there some possible players dependent upon where we decide, if we decide to utilize a pick on an offensive lineman, that can add depth or provide real value for us,' and those are things that we're excited about seeing how this week unfolds, but a lot of good options and that's a huge part of what the last couple months have entailed."

**(On the thought process on signing P Corey Bojorguez and if that impacts P Johnny Hekker's status)**

**Snead:** "I will put that under the, I call it the 'Nickell Robey Bucket' and every year during free agency, right when the bells about to ring, each team gets a waiver wire and has all the lists of their unrestricted free agents on it but there is this subset list of players who weren't tendered by their club for a reason and I know Nickell Robey(-Coleman) was one of those players, (LB) Ramik Wilson, if you remember him. So, I know our pro staff, (Assistant Director Pro Scouting) John McKay has been leading the charge with Ray (Agnew) leaving for bigger and better things and (Pro Scout) Matt Waugh working with him, but I know the punter was one that they recommended as someone that had a very good year, didn't get tendered for (inaudible) of a reasons. So, to the Nickell Robey-Coleman signing, to the Ramik Wilson signing, us signing (QB) Duck (Delvin) Hodges this year, claiming (OL) Austin Blythe or (CB) Troy Hill or (CB) Darious Williams. It's when a player comes available, it's a chance to add and I think, obviously Johnny's resume speaks for itself. Right now I think we've got the most specialists of probably anybody in the league. We have probably seven. Probably got two kickers, two punters and one guy who can kick and punt and two long snappers, but I know we began that a little bit last year, because during COVID if you did have an outbreak and you did lose some players, if you lost a corner, there's usually three, four or five others that you have an answer for, but with the specialist, if you lose anyone in contact tracing, there's truly no answers, so it goes under that bucket."

**(On clarifying that this isn't a punting competition)**

**McVay:** "No. It's not."

**Snead:** "Well, I think anytime you go to the practice field it's a competition but no."

**(On how big of a priority it is to draft a center)**

**McVay:** "I think it's not something that you feel like you have to fill because we've got a lot of guys in house that we feel like are more than capable of being starting-caliber NFL centers. And so, if it's something, dependent upon how everything falls, it might be something that you address. But I think the one thing that's been really good and Les and I've talked about this, and it's a real credit to Les and his group, and really everybody in its entirety, is that we don't have any major glaring holes where it's like, 'Okay, you've got to address this position or else,' we're not really asking anybody to feel like they have to come in and immediately start. You are trying to provide depth at some positions, there's different things based on the personnel groupings, offensively or defensively that we want to try to fulfill, there's some different things that (Special Teams Coordinator) Joe DeCamillis and (Assistant Special Teams Coach) Dwayne Stukes are looking for to help kind of fill out the way that we envision trying to be one of the upper-echelon special teams, units, and outfits in the league but that's something that if it happens, it happens, but we feel more than comfortable if we don't draft a center that we can fulfill that with the guys that we already have on the roster right now."

**(On if he is comfortable with WR Nsimba Webster as the punt returner or if he is looking for a returner in the draft)**

**McVay:** "I think (WR) Nsimba (Webster) did some really nice things. Obviously adding DeSean Jackson, he's had some experience and history returning punts. But I don't think you can find enough guys that have the ability to influence and affect the game when the ball is in their hands and certainly those returners – and hopefully if we continue to be as successful as we were and as we've been over the last handful of years defensively, that punt return unit and operation is extremely important. We have got guys that are capable, but if there is somebody that provides return value that certainly makes them more enticing. When you look at some of these receivers or guys on the back end that can also provide real punt return and kick return value for Coach DeCamillis and Coach Stukes, it's definitely something that we take into consideration as well."

**(On if he values catching or returning the ball more in the returner position)**

**McVay:** "Well, I think both are really important. You're looking for guys that can score points, but I think it's all of those things. It's ball security, it's decision making, and then it's the ability to be able to create, hit those vertical seams, make people miss and get vertical. But the guys that can ring the bell, as Joe DeCamillis would say, are certainly the ones that are the most enticing and the guys that you want, but it's hard to find them. They're rare guys. But I think you have to be able to No. 1 is the ball security and the decision-making and then the explosiveness and the ability to create after that are the things that you'd love to be able to have, but there's very few that can actually check all those boxes."

**(On assessing this year's draft class of inside linebackers)**

**Snead:** "I'll keep my true assessment in house (laughs). (Inaudible). The one thing I will say is the interesting part of evaluating inside linebackers is with how the game is changing. Seeing who's playing it, how college defenses are utilizing players. Again, the kid that ran yesterday at LSU, go out, transfer from North Dakota State and go cover the number three receiver in the slot, similar to what nickel corners do. So, it's fun. It's an assessment of trying to work through what types do we have, what types do we need, who can help also cover kicks and those type things. So that's a very important position to scrutinize."

**(On if this draft is unique or different without having any major holes to fill)**

**Snead:** "Well, it's an enticing spot to be in because you can truly let the draft unfold and I call it, 'Take the best player,' because best available player can be subjective. Our best available maybe another team's not best available, so that's subjective. But what it does do is it gives you a little bit of freedom. At this point in time (last year), I don't know if we let it out in a press conference, but we're pretty intentional about attacking that running back spot, maybe this year a little bit different. So, it gives you that flexibility, but that's the nice thing about where we're at as a football team."

**(On evaluating a player who opted out of the 2020 season)**

**McVay:** “I think Les and his group do such a great job with the background. The tape is always the best guiding light. So, you go back to their ‘19 film and you use that as the most important reference. Then the character is all a big part of it. Les and his group do an outstanding job of vetting these players and really our coaches as well, it’s all part of it. But the most important thing that guides our decision-making is, first and foremost, the tape. You don’t punish a guy. This past year has certainly been, I think one that is different in so many ways, but you don’t punish guys for that. You go back to the tape. You look at what they’ve previously done – and then there are some projections with guys that maybe have less tangible evidence on the tape and it all is a part of the evaluation process. But certainly nothing weighs more than when you’re evaluating them playing the game that we’re going to ask them to do.”

**Snead:** “I’ll add to that. One of the bigger impacts of COVID and Sean picked up on the cue, is when we’re watching a player and you start with film when the stands are full, then Sean would go, ‘Okay, this is an opt-out right, cause you’re watching 19’ tapes.’ So that’s probably one of the major impacts of COVID and the opt-out is, ‘Hey, this must be an opt-out because stands are full (laughs).’”

**(On if Cardinals Head Coach Kliff Kingsbury called to let him know he was upset about last year’s draft)**

**McVay:** “No, you know what? A couple of things – I was glad (Cardinals Head Coach) Kliff (Kingsbury) was such a big fan watching us on Hard Knocks to know every detail about what went on. And then I think he was trying to get me back for when I got him a couple of years ago before he had coached a game with the Cardinals. He had gone out to dinner with a group of people and (Chiefs QB Patrick) Mahomes was there. I had him convinced that he was going to miss out on that first overall pick and he and (Cardinals General Manager) Steve Keim weren’t going to be able to draft (Cardinals QB) Kyler Murray. So, I think that was a delayed payback that he was trying to get me on. But I’m glad that he was watching our Hard Knocks season so closely (laughs).”

**Snead:** “It does seem like we’ve seen (Seahawks Head Coach) Pete Carroll without his shirt on (laughs).”

**(On how important cornerbacks are in this draft)**

**Snead:** “It’s always important to add corner depth. And I do think, like we have been able to over the last few years, we’ve been able to draft, have that player not come in and have to cover teams’ number one or number two wide receivers immediately. But again, I like where we’re at in the draft, 57 and then 88 and 103. Really at that point in time, you don’t want to go into it saying, ‘Hey, we have to have this position.’ That’s where you may reach. So, we’re well aware of the corners and whether they play inside, out, both or just outside. Whether Joe D. and Coach Stukes like what they’ve done covering kicks in college and whether they’ve returned some punts or kicks in their time. So, we’re definitely well aware, but that’s a position that’s sought after and a lot of good players usually go early in that position because it does take a special human to be able to go play that position for sure.”

**(On keeping CB Darious Williams long term with the projected salary cap and when that gets talked about)**

**Snead:** “I think it’s obvious (CB) Darious (Williams) is obviously someone you’d love to be a Ram for a long time. We will definitely begin having those discussions internally. We’re a little bit tougher right now, based on the variables you mentioned, and even tougher for planning, because you’re not necessarily sure how next year goes and what’s going to happen there. But as (former Defensive Coordinator) Wade Phillips used to say, ‘Good players get paid,’ and Darious has proven to be a good player. I’ve always said we’d love to have as many good players as possible, guys like Darious. His story’s pretty cool. Give him credit, give our coaches credit for developing him and having the courage to put him out there and then give him credit for making the most of that opportunity.”

**(On assessing the risk that comes with medically evaluating players this year due to opt-outs)**

**Snead:** “I think Reggie Scott, his staff, our doctors – they may have more gray hair than I do. What I can tell you is the information Reggie has provided myself, I don’t have as many gray hairs and I think it’s a credit to them for being able to orchestrate this with all the adversity, if you want to call it that, that they ran into. So, the information they’ve provided is as good as it has been in the past and maybe even better at times with some people who didn’t get to Indy, per se because it’s been such a proactive and intentional

process. But medical is a big thing. You've been playing football for a long time – high school, college and some of them have started a lot of games, some have been injured previously, things like that. It's a hazardous occupation, but the probabilities are very similar to what they've been in the past. Reggie and everyone who's been behind the scenes, that's not just on our staff, to make this happen to get the information to us.”

**(On the alleged situation with DL Aaron Donald)**

**McVay:** “I think (Chief Operating Officer) Kevin Demoff, when he was asked about it, said it best – I think that's why you let things play themselves out. I had spoken to (DL) Aaron (Donald) immediately and I have total trust in him. We were very confident that the facts would come out and that this would be something that would kind of take care of itself as you just demonstrated patience and truly let the process play out. That's exactly what it entailed and it's kind of where we were at with it. We feel very fortunate. Aaron was great, communicated very clearly and I love Aaron. I'm glad it worked itself out.”