



Los Angeles Rams Transcripts - Defensive Coordinator Raheem Morris, Offensive Coordinator Liam Coen, Defensive Tackle Aaron Donald - Friday, September 30, 2022

Defensive Coordinator Raheem Morris

(On DB Jalen Ramsey's leadership and him taking ownership of the secondary)

“Absolute growth in his leadership, you're exactly right. From an on the field and off the field type mentality, he always feels like if he can get involved early, I can get him going for the rest of the game to kind of lead the way. Him getting the game ball this week, really the last two weeks, has been impressive. Him starting to game off with a big third down stop, him getting involved early on the big third down stop over the middle, some of those things, a third and one tackle for loss. Some of those things are just critical. He's taking his game to a whole new level where he wants to eliminate some missed opportunities. Like two-minute at the end of the game, he makes that type of play again. It's kind of those legendary performances you can talk about and making those kind of picks in those moments. He's done such a really good job of taking over from not just a show mentality, but kind of a leadership, stand up, talking, being in the meeting room, being engaged. Some of the things that he's done in walkthrough has been a little bit different for him, so to speak, and that's a good

thing. That's a credit to his growth and development as a leader and I love it. I absolutely love it."

(On what he has seen out of LB Terrell Lewis)

"He's been the best version of himself that I've seen since I've been here. He's healthy, he's moving well, he's rushing well, he's playing the run well, he's making plays every single week. They're really out there splitting time, both of those guys (LB Justin Hollins) are starters. We view those guys as starters, and those guys have made a bunch of plays. Terrell's definitely showed up in a big way and had a major part in all the games that we played. I credit him for the work he's put into in the offseason, the work that he's put into it just in general to get to this point. I'm proud of him for what he's done."

(On if he wants to see the defense be more aggressive)

"I think every week is different for me. I always tell you, 'Stats are for losers' and people that search for stats are people trying to justify what they do. My whole justification comes within wins. If we could have a way to win every single week, that's the way we're going to try to win. I'm not out here trying to self-promote and make it just be aggressive just so I can say, 'Hey, we went out there and shut people down' or whatever case may be. I'd like to, but we're going to do whatever it takes to win that week no matter what. That's just my mentality and it always will be."

(On if the 49ers having QB Jimmy Garoppolo back makes it like the same old 49ers or if they are different at all this year)

"This is the 49ers that I know. As long as (49ers Head Coach) Kyle Shanahan runs that program, these 49ers will be the same. They'll have the same mentality, the same toughness. Jimmy being back out there, getting their guy that's led them the last couple of years, obviously is playing through a little rust. The guy didn't have an offseason, he didn't have a preseason, I think he's in his

second full week of practice, just to put that in perspective for everybody that wants to be Jimmy haters. I think this guy is a tough football player that always plays the game well that is built similarly to what I was talking about, I think all he cares about is winning. I think his winning percentage shows that. I think what he's been able to do, taking a team to the Super Bowl, taking a team to the NFC Championship. When he is healthy and ready to go, he'll be his best version of himself and they'll get back to that, just not this week, I hope. Playing these guys, man, it's Niner week. That means a lot around here. That means a lot and for the two franchises, probably more so us than them, but they definitely had our numbers the last couple of times, except for the most important one, which we got the bragging rights right now. They're going to come in with a little chip on their shoulder. Obviously, what's going on over there doesn't really matter, it's really about us.”

(On if he would like to get to a point where he is blitzing less and rushing with four similar to last season)

“Those are stats I do care about. When you’re talking about affecting the quarterback, that's part of our philosophy, right? You want to be able to affect the quarterback as much as you can, anyway you can, but particularly if you can do it with a four-man rush, that makes your day a lot easier. So when I say ‘stats are for losers’, it's kind of a cliché thing, but there are some stats that are definitely a part of winning. There are some stats that definitely you want to use as a measuring point for your guys and for what they do and definitely affecting the quarterback is one of those things. It’s part of our philosophy, it’s part of who we want to be, and I think the guys all want to do that too. Can we improve our four-man rush? There's no doubt, there's no question about it, but I think it all ties together. Can our coverage get stickier and tighter and more aggressive? No question. Those are the things that all tie together and make the guys get better and better throughout the season. Ultimately, that's what you've got to do throughout this long season.”

(On what he has seen from the young defensive backs)

“The young defensive backs have been really fun to watch and it's been like that from the beginning of the camp. Whether you are talking about (DB) Cobie Durant, whether you are talking about (DB) DK (Derion Kendrick), whether you are talking about (DB) Robert Rochell, they've all been exciting, they've all had exciting days from the very beginning of training camp and it's kind of carried over into the season. Who knew that we'd have the opportunity this early to play this many guys, and this amount of guys at that time? But it's happened and it always happens. It always will happen. They were ready to go, credit to those guys. Whether it's been Cobie, DK, whether it's been Robert, these guys have stepped up in a big major way. (DB) Terrell Burgess you've got to put into that category last week, going out there playing little bit for (DB Jordan) Fuller. These guys have done a great job going out there playing and being young DBs and doing exactly what we asked them to do in order to get wins. Right now, we're 2-1 and they've done a nice job of getting us to that point and we got to continue to grow.”

(On what he thinks the key to stopping the 49ers rush is like they did in the NFC Championship Game, and what impact LB Bobby Wagner can have on that)

“That's a good question. Let's go back to the short history that I've been here. In that first game, they came up and they got after us running the football, I believe it was 156 yards. I think it was a cloud of dust. I think it was like 40+ attempts. That's a tough day. They got time of possession, they were able to maintain and dominate rundowns, another stat that I care about, they were able to do that. The second time we came out, we did a much better job and we lost it in a two-minute drill. (QB) Jimmy Garoppolo made some big time plays in that two-minute and won the game for them. I think those things were all learning lessons to build up to what we did in that NFC Championship Game. Talking

about how you want to throw hands in the run game to be effective like we were in that game and how you want to finish games at the end with the mental stamina it took in order to win that championship game, in order to go out there and get that stop for (LB) T(ravin) Howard, I believe, to get that pick at the end of the game, for (DT) Aaron (Donald) to get that rush, all those things. The mental stamina it takes to get those things done, that's the type of game it is. That's what I mean by it's Niner week. All of those things matter, all those things will be in play. Bobby Wagner for us can do nothing but come out and make big time plays, big time tackles, tackle as strong as he has. You can't do nothing to get better. No disrespect to what (former Rams LB) Troy (Reeder) did. I actually showed Troy last week and what he did in that NFC Championship Game and the violence and the temperament he brought to that game to their guys, I thought was a different level for all of us and I think it was different."

(On what it meant last week to have so many new defensive players on such short notice)

"I don't know if it meant anything to me. I think it's a credit to the coaches that are responsible for those players in those positions. You talk about (Defensive Backs Coach) Jonathan Cooley, you're talking about (Passing Game Coordinator/Defensive Backs Coach) Chris Shula, the amount of work that they put with these guys throughout the offseason, throughout the training camp, and throughout the development of when we do have the starters out there. I remember when I was a young coach and when I was in (Defensive Assistant) Lance Schulters' position and (former Buccaneers Defensive Backs Coach) Mike Tomlin would say, "Hey Ra, I got the first four, you got the other guys. Tell me who's ready,' in that voice, and I never forget it. I always remember being able to say, 'Hey (former Buccaneers DB) Scott Foster is ready to go play these positions, do this in the game for you. We feel confident getting these things done.' There's no different when you're talking about a position coach talking to

a coordinator. I really believe that you've got to give Jonathan Cooley, Chris Shula, Lance Schulters, those guys, their veteran leadership and (DB) Jalen Ramsey, who you were talking about, a lot of credit for getting guys ready behind the scenes, for getting guys ready right on site, (Head Coach) Sean McVay for the style of practices that we have, our temperament and how it goes in the offseason. I think those things all play part of that."

(On if there is anything in the 49ers' offense that keeps him up at night or gives him some concern)

"It's funny, I never sleep good these nights anyway, these preparation nights just in general. But for sure it's trying to stay one step ahead of arguably one of the better playcallers in our league. We got one in this building, they know they have one in their building for sure, and there's others in the league. But when you're playing those guys in those type of weeks, , they want to step ahead. What's going to be his next move? What's his next chess piece? What holes do we see in the tape? Especially when you know and you've been in the same building and been on the same side of the ball with a guy who you know exactly what he's doing. He got to our 11 personnel yesterday at about 12:30. He was looking at that and scanning through as he went through base and every other personnel group that he has. He's trying to find little, small, minute details in when he can make us predictable, you got to know those things. You better study yourself just as much as you're studying him."

(On the point when he started to realize the similarities in personnel and decision making between Rams Head Coach Sean McVay, 49ers Head Coach Kyle Shanahan, and Bengals Head Coach Zac Taylor start to diverge)

"I think it's all the creativity of the guys. You watch Zac (Taylor) and what he's done since he's gone to Cincinnati and spreading people out and really being creative with the guys that he's got and the people that can stand in different

positions and play different ways. Then you watch Kyle Shanahan use all the different jokers and (49ers WR) Deebo (Samuel) being a tailback and (49ers FB Kyle) Juszczyk being a tight end or Juszczyk being a wide receiver or same thing with (49ers TE George) Kittle and all the different jokers that they're able to present and create themselves. No different than what Sean McVay is able to do. When you get a chance to see a new fullback be able to go out there and make different plays with all the different play designs, the styles that they have. That's what I kind of mean when you allude to what's next, because there's going to be something and what do you have to adjust to? They're always going to have their bread and butter, they're always going to have their scheme, they're always going to be able to present that dominant run factor and how they're going to get that thing lined up and you have an answer for that. Then what's next when it's coming, and something's going to come. You better be ready to adjust, you better be ready to hit it on the fly, you better be ready to communicate it, more importantly, to your players.”

(On why WR Cooper Kupp is still so effective and able to be successful even though teams know he's going to get the ball)

“Same thing I say to myself in training camp. You know he is going to get the ball and you can't stop him. It's the amount of work he puts into it. I mentioned those play callers, the (Head Coach) Sean McVay's, the (San Francisco 49ers Head Coach) Kyle Shanahan's, if you had a category for receivers in intellect and dialogue, Cooper Kupp would be right up there. I ain't saying that he's the best, because I haven't been around everybody, but from what I've been around, he is without a doubt at a different level than most. The amount of work that he puts into it, the amount of work that he looks at your defense and knows what's happening, the amount of work that he puts into it with (QB Matthew) Stafford, the way they can communicate with him, Sean, Stafford, (Offensive Coordinator) Liam (Coen), all those guys, that whole offensive staff, (Wide Receivers Coach) Eric Yarber. They do an amazing job of finding ways to get

him the ball. (University of Alabama Head Coach) Nick Saban was one of the famous people to say back in the day, 'You got to be able to run it when they know.' I think Cooper's taking that to a whole new level of catching the football and being productive at whatever he's doing. Jet sweeps, who knew? You can do whatever."

(On the defense perspective of taking away separation from a receiver and what makes WR Cooper Kupp so different)

"Thank God I don't have to take away Cooper Kupp. He's a masterful guy that can get on your edge. He can work at edges about as good as anybody. He can make his moves look exactly the same when he's going opposite ways. Now he's added this new vertical element to his game that's just taken him to a whole new level. I think that's the biggest difference in Cooper Kupp."

Offensive Coordinator Liam Coen

(On if facing a defense that's number one in multiple categories keeps him up at night)

"My child keeps me up at night. No, it's definitely a challenge. We've been facing these guys for a long time, dating back to 2019. They've kind of had our number in a lot of ways, right? You go back and watch the NFC Championship game and the way that these guys played. The Rams played them hard and played them tough and you kind of competed at their own game, tried to play physical, tried to get downhill a little bit, ended up having to throw it a little bit in those situations, so many get back on track down in distances, ton of third downs that I think 11-of-17, I forget what the exact stat line was but you know it's tough sledding. It's a very, very fundamentally sound, physical unit that we're going up against and obviously very skilled. They have a ton of first round draft picks. They have a ton of developmental picks that they've had that have

really kind of developed throughout the last couple years. So yeah, it's definitely a challenge for sure.”

(On what has to happen to get a consistent running game going)

“I think that it's really just, ‘What do we do best? How do we attack these guys in terms of throughout the game?’ Like obviously we have an intent of what we're trying to accomplish going in, but things change a little bit. Some runs throughout a game ended up a little bit different or better or worse than maybe you thought going into it. So I think it's really identifying once we get into the flow of the game, ‘What are we having success with?’ And trying to maybe emulate that success throughout the game. I'm not saying you call the same plays over and over again, but hey, if it's working, hey why don't we continue to go back to that and have some of the compliments off of that. It's a challenge. They are very stout in the run game. But I think our guys are up to the challenge. We did a full padded practice yesterday. We really got some good physical work in in the run game. It was a big emphasis for us so I think our guys know, our players and our staff know that we do need to establish it. It's just, ‘Hey, at what point do we continue to bang our heads against the wall if it's not working?’”

(On if there's a sense among the offensive line to prove themselves after the Buffalo Bills game since the San Francisco 49ers defense has emulated that type of defense)

“No question. If you watch that film, if you're the 49ers, I mean there's a recipe there that maybe they feel good about because of the way they're built. It's kind of how they've played a little bit over the last couple weeks, specifically on third downs, where you used to see a lot more pressure some things that way, now you're seeing a little bit more four-man rush, playing zone coverage, where they do feel good about maybe getting some five-man rush man coverage, where they have some one on ones. That's the biggest challenge. That's when you

have the opportunity to sit back and play zone coverage and rush four, and still get a pretty significant rush. Our quarterbacks, our receivers, it's so important that we're at the right depth, the right timing, that the quarterback is playing in rhythm. We talk about DTA - decision, timing, and accuracy. That is at a paramount this week in terms of understanding you're not probably getting more than a hitch. So we need to be able to play fast. The quarterback I think is geared up for this deal and I think this is a perfect fit for him to be able to play fast and get his momentum going as well. The guys know up front that we need a strain. It's going to be a challenge.”

(On what the problem solving has been for playing against this type of defense)

“I think it's picking and choosing your spots. That's something we want to be able to utilize tempo as a weapon. We always talk about that and it's more so about, ‘Hey, how do we pick and choose our spots and Be able to play fast but also get into some premier looks?’ I think we've done a nice job of mixing it over the last couple weeks.(We’re) finding our identity still. We're continuing to find our identity as an offense huddle, a little bit more of this, in terms of how we get guys in the right spots to be able to use them. So I think our guys are really geared up. They understand the plan right now, but that's definitely a challenge when you're looking down the barrel and you see four-man rush and it's kind of closing in on you, but you also see umbrella-ish coverage. That's something that I think we've got some better answers for moving into this week.”

(On how WR Ben Skowronek playing fullback helps the offensive line)

“It's great. He's got the mentality. He's got that mindset and mentality. (I) saw it show up on special teams last year. When we brought this up to him, he was so geared up, he was so jacked up to be able to do some of the things that we're asking him to do. Then you saw him be able to come alive in the pass game as well. So you create a conflict. You create a different, another gap in the run

game. Which way is it going when you do get them into the “I-formation”, you do create some conflict which way the lead of the run is going. You can create some split flow. It just creates some different looks for the defense, especially when you're in your normal 11 personnel grouping. Then we've been able to activate him in the pass game. You saw him lead up on (RB) (Akers) touchdown last week on the linebacker there and buckled him pretty good and continued on into the end zone. So he's playing physical, he is playing fast, and he is giving us a big time contribution.”

(On if there is any concern with their passing game)

“No, I don't think so. I think we feel good about our matchups on the outside. It's a challenge when you are playing a lot of zone coverage. If we get into some man premier coverages, I think we have the guys to win. We feel good about those matchups, but they've got some younger guys in the back end as well, a couple new starters, some different players in the back end that they're working through as well, as do we. So I think it's a little bit about, ‘Hey, we're continuing to find our identity in the pass game, picking and choosing our spots to push the ball down the field if we need to, and try to be able to pepper completions and stay on track. That's the biggest thing. Can we stay on track and not live in those known passing situations maybe as much as we have?”

(On what it means to have WR Brandon Powell in their offense)

“He's just a football player. He'll be able to move around a little bit, play a couple different positions. He's just functional. He's functional and he's explosive when he gets the ball in his hands. He's a competitor. He's played a lot of football. Obviously, he plays a lot of ball throughout the course of the game on the return game. So he's just a natural guy who's... you're talking about somebody that's filling in, but he's also in the flow of the game already because of teams so you're not worrying about somebody coming off a little bit cold, trying to get into the rhythm of the game, that's half of it when you're really

that fourth or fifth wide receiver, when you're not getting a ton of reps and then you're just thrust into a role. That's not easy to do. He's already in the flow of the game, which I think helps his mindset and mentality and he brings it every day. He brings that kind of mindset and the players love him.”

(On how important timing is for WR Cooper Kupp in terms of separation)

“It's huge. I think he knows maybe a quick, a tick faster this week, in terms of some of the decision making. I think all of our guys have that sort of mindset. It's not like we need to be in a rush, but we do need to have a different sense of urgency all throughout on the offensive side of the ball whether it be in pass protection, whether it be running the football, whether it be in the pass game, decisions, all those types of things. I think Cooper understands that this is a little bit different now and we might need to speed up some decisions. But he's so calm, cool, collected on game day. Usually nothing really rattles him or gets him to do something other than what he is normally doing.”

(On how getting Cooper Kupp's jet sweep on tape so that people know it's an option)

“For sure. And that had been a little bit of a staple of our identity over the years prior. Once you hand one of those off, especially you saw the timing of which we did it at. The way that play was executed was such a high level. It was so difficult for the defenders to see where the ball actually was. You put that on tape, now they have to honor it throughout the week. It's a good coaching point.”

Defensive Tackle Aaron Donald

(On what the week of preparation is like for a team they know well)

“Just trying to find ways to understand the game plan, what we're doing, and

obviously, watching a lot of film that we got against those guys and what we typically (have) seen and new things that we could probably get. So, I think we got a good game plan, just got to go out there, execute it, and try to find a way to be victorious.”

(On if his competitiveness goes up when playing the 49ers)

“(Laughs) For sure. This is a divisional game, you know? It's important. Anytime you're in a divisional game, you want to continue to be the top dog. You know what kind of type of game it's going to be, physical game, and we got to get after them.”

(On QB Jimmy Garoppolo and the key to containing him in the pass game)

“We got to just get after him. Typically, he gets the ball out quick when he play against us, so not getting frustrated at times, try to get our hands up and affect the play if you can. I know the guys on the back end are going to do their job and try to help us to make him have to hold a little longer and our job is just to find a way to get him down or affect him, make him uncomfortable, and try to make him have a bad day. That's why we're out there. We don't want him happy. We don't want him to be able to step up in the pocket. We want him to be antsy, uncomfortable, and if we do that, we can have a good day.”

(On the 49ers getting the ball out quickly)

“Well, a lot of quarterbacks have been doing that. You get certain looks, they want to go so called 'one-on-ones', the ball comes out quick to the point where you ain't really got time to rush. By the time you engage, the balls out of his hands. It's smart, and as far as the defenses, as far as everybody playing together, secondary, linebackers to us up front...for us to have success, we need those guys on the back end to have success and for us to do what we need to do and affect a play. That can help the guys on the back end, so they

work hand in hand.”

(On if the offseason is more about studying the division opponents or about himself)

“For offseason, it's more just me studying myself. Obviously, getting certain looks that I know I'm going to get as far as how to defeat certain slide protections or things that I'm getting or what I can do to try to defeat a triple team or a back chipping or whatever they got going on. So offseason is just me. More grinding, trying to figure out what I'm doing good, what I'm doing wrong and what I can do to fix it or make it better.”

(On what the film study challenge is when you know so much about a team already)

“Well, it's different this year because they pretty much got a whole a new offensive line. So, it's a lot more studying for me, trying to see how they play. It's only been three games. I know they got a young group, but seeing how they play, certain sets they're doing, just trying to get a grasp of what they do, what they're good at, what they're not good at, and just trying to break it down to a 'T' (so) I feel like when I'm out there, I'm comfortable enough to understand what I'm going to get, how they're going to set, how they're going to do certain things so I can be able to play fast.”

(On the challenge of facing 49ers WR Deebo Samuel)

“Well, I think it comes down to the whole defense just swarming. At times, he'll be in the back field and find a way to get him down. Sometimes they might bring a reverse or a screen, we all got to swarm and tackle. That's what it comes down to, not missing tackles and bottling him up, not letting him get himself going. If we do that, we can eliminate him. That's what you got to do. You got to try to find a way to eliminate him because he's a big part of that team, big part of that offense and they move him around in so many places so

it ain't just one or two guys that got to worry about him, it's the whole defense.”

(On LB Bobby Wagner’s familiarity with the 49ers and how that’s helped preparation)

“I guess it helped, but him just understanding how we’re going to play this week, understanding the game plan, what we’re going to be doing, certain looks we’re going to be doing, certain things we’re going to be checking into. So I think it’s just more of what you got to do here, with us, and him understanding that.”

(On if he learned anything new from Wagner’s experience going against the 49ers)

“No, not that different.”

(On how the young defensive backs played last week)

“They’ve been playing good, they’ve been playing good. Making some big plays at times, being stout, finding a way. I think last week showed, even though (it) felt like we played a lot of plays, we could have done some things better as a defense, but overall, we didn't allow them to score or get in the end zone so that's a big shout out to the secondary doing things, being stout, making big plays at times, deflecting passes and that's what it's about. Anytime you got guys that go down, you want the guy that steps up and is going to be playing not have a drop off and I think that kind of showed no drop off and guys made plays when they needed to make plays and we found a way to win.”

(On if the offensive line is taught to pin arms of defensive lineman with teams that have a quick passing game)

“Well, you just got to protect when you jump because they can hit you down. It happened to me multiple times before. Yeah, there's certain things they do that could chop you down when you're jumping up, so it's about to protecting

yourself too.”

(On former Rams OLB Von Miller’s “ghost” pass rush move)

“I know what makes it effective, but I wish I could do it, but I couldn't. I was out there messing with it during walkthrough. I was messing around trying to do the ‘Von ghost’, but that ain't me. He had a lot of success doing that and him being a quick guy, smaller guy, able to bend a certain way. He's just a different type of guy.”

(On if the ghost pass rush is something you can only do from the outside)

“I got this much space and I got three, four guys (laughs)! There ain't no way I'm getting that. Did you see that much space with me? No, I don't get that no more. That's gone. I ain't never going to get that (laughs). Forget about it.”

(On if he feels extra gratification hitting the 100-sack mark from a position that traditionally doesn't produce a lot of sacks)

“Just playing. Obviously, it's a blessing to accomplish great things, but just playing the game and just doing my job and trying to find ways to be successful, help my team to win and being consistent. That's what it's about in its league. So, just playing a game and playing at a high level. To see the hard work pay off and accomplish something, it's a blessing. But still got a lot more football left and I got room for improvement.”

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