



Los Angeles Rams Transcripts - Defensive Lineman **Aaron Donald - Wednesday, May 10, 2023**

Defensive Lineman Aaron Donald

(On what it was like after his injury and why he decided to stay)

“It was different, obviously. It was my first time in my whole life playing football having a serious injury, so having to sit down and really get my body back to where it needed to be, treat my body how I needed to, it was a long process but it comes with it. It comes with the profession. It's a physical sport. Anything can happen so just trying to do everything I can to get myself back to where I need to be.”

(On why he decided to stay knowing that the defense would have to be “overhauled”)

“Well, that's a part of football. Obviously, I can't control that. I made a commitment to this organization to do everything I can to do my part, but obviously it's different than what we've seen in the past few years. But a lot of young guys are going to have to step up, have to be a huge part to helping us have success. So it's going to be a long journey, but you just got to stay focused on what you need to focus on and just continue to work.”

(On why he had such a good attitude and approach for the plan for this season)

“Because you kind of got an idea on what was going on as far as certain moves they were going to have to make, but it was more, we bring young guys in...as long as they got the mindset to work and they got the right mindset to just go out there (and) do what they need to do at a high level, and (are) willing to put that work in. Me personally as a football player, as a competitor, I can work with that. I want a bunch of guys that are hungry. It doesn't matter if they haven't played any snaps, (if) they've played 10 snaps, as long as they have that mindset to want to go out there and compete at a high level and try to do everything in their power to be the best player they can be, we can work with them.”

(On if he had surgery and what the rehab was like)

“Yeah, I had surgery. Like I said, it was different. It was the first time I had ever been hurt in my career, so it was different but I'm at a hundred percent now so that's all that matters. Feeling good, able to do everything I need to do to get myself where I need to be.”

(On how he doesn't like to sit still)

“Not at all, that's definitely different. I was forced to really have to relax so it was tough for me mentally, but obviously having family around me and (Vice President, Sports Medicine and Performance) Reggie (Scott), (Associate Athletic Trainer) Mark (Dydasco) and those guys did an amazing job as far as getting me back to health. It was a process, but we're here now.”

(On if he gave any consideration to retiring after last season)

“Not really, honestly. (You) never want to end your career how it was last year, so it never really crossed my mind. I was just trying to do everything I can to get myself up and to be here today.”

(On the lessons he learned from last year that will help him moving

forward)

“You need everybody. That's to the third-team players to the fourth-tier players. Everybody has to be ready to play because anything can happen at any time. We've seen that last year. A bunch of guys went down, even the guys that are considered the backup guys went down, so it was to a point where a lot of young guys had to step up so just continue to get those guys ready and (have) them understand that at any time their names can be called and they're going to have to play a huge part helping us to get the job done.”

(On what it's going to be like to play without former teammates such as CB Jalen Ramsey, LB Bobby Wagner, and OLB Leonard Floyd)

“It's going to be different. You just said a bunch of playmakers' names. Obviously, (I) wish I could play with them my whole career and it'd be that, but it is not like that, so it is different. But again, the young guys might need to step up. That's me as a leader to get those guys ready. That's on them as professionals to get themselves ready as well so you just got to trust them. You got to trust that...obviously, a lot of these guys played a lot of football last year, but again, I wasn't on the field to get to play with them. So again, building that football relationship with them as far as learning how I play, how they play. But it's a process and I'm willing to put the work in and get it done.”

(On if having a lot of younger players puts more pressure on him)

“No, I'm just going to play ball. I've been playing since I was five, six-years-old. Obviously, I'm going to try to do everything in my power to continue to play at the high level. And again, you just got to trust that the guys next to you are going to get their jobs done.”

(On his initial reaction to Dolphins DB Jalen Ramsey, Seahawks LB Bobby Wagner, and OLB Leonard Floyd leaving this offseason)

“You're going to miss those guys. Obviously, Jalen reached out to me and

talked to me. You are going to miss those guys, but I know Jalen and he's happy. He's not happy that he's gone, but he's in a situation where he can continue to have some success and (with) a team that he wanted to go to. So again, you're going to miss those guys, but it just comes with it I guess."

(On HC Sean McVay's transparency about his struggles last season)

"You love him. Obviously, we all went through that. It was a big shock to us all. Obviously coming off the year we had until last year it was different, but there's a lot of things you can learn from a personal standpoint, even from a mental standpoint. At the end of the day, it's just a game. You can't try to put too much in... as much as we put all this time into (it) and as much effort as we put in trying to be the best that we can be and it doesn't turn out to how you want it to be, it just comes with it. Everything can't be perfect all the time and that was just more of a learning experience last year, if anything."

(On if he will become more of a vocal leader with more young players on the defense)

"At times I feel like I'm going to need to be. Obviously, you don't have a (Seahawks LB) Bobby Wagner or Jalen (Ramsey) out there to do it, but again you got a guy like (LB) Ernest (Jones) that's going to step up and play that leadership role as well. You got (DB Jordan) Fuller out there, so there's guys that are young, but on this team they're no longer young. It's time to step up and be a leader as well, so you just got to trust that those guys are going to be there to speak up and motivate me too. You know, we all need it no matter how long you've been playing this game or how much success you've had in it. We all need somebody to push you at times and if I'm slacking, I want them to let me know that I'm slacking so I can pick it up, so I can get better. So that's what it's about. It's holding each other accountable and pushing each other."

(On the external expectations of the Rams changing and how he uses that

as motivation going into this year)

“I kind of like it. It's like starting all over again from scratch. We ain't the team that's talked about. It's kind of like the little underdogs. You just get to work and just play. You ain't got to worry about too much other stuff. You just get to play at a high level and just fly around and then wherever the chips may fall...Obviously the media and everything will be talking how they want to talk. As long as we do our job and do what we need to do, we are going to be in good position and be the type of team we want to be.”

(On if he feels aches and pains since he'll turn 32-years-old this month)

“I feel them. I feel them, so a lot more as far as just taking care of my body. Not just from a physical standpoint, but making sure I'm healthy as far as if that's extra stretching, things like that. I got to continue to do to just keep myself fresh so it's different. I'm getting used to it. Aches and pains last a little longer, but it comes with it.”

(On if he agrees with McVay, Les Snead and Kevin Demoff that the Rams will be better than most people might expect)

“I guess you have got to watch and see. So obviously I trust the guys we got out there. Obviously, I'm going to do my part, but all you can do is do what we need to do, worry about today, and then we're going to see.”

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