



LOS ANGELES RAMS

Rams Offensive Tackle Andrew Whitworth – Media Availability – January 16, 2019

(On what it means to him to be one game away from appearing in the Super Bowl)

"Well, I think throughout my career, I've had the opportunity to play in a lot of playoff games and be on a lot of good football teams. I've cherished every one of them. Haven't had the opportunity to win a playoff game, but to finally win one, was definitely something that I was really excited about. Obviously, emotional about it just because of the work it takes year-in and year-out to get there. Also, just all the people that have meant to me to win one for. I said it earlier this year, it meant a lot because I believed in the people in this locker room and I believe in, really, the direction of this football team. For it to be proven right, is something else. It just made me proud and emotional about just having that opportunity to move forward."

(On him winning a national title with LSU in the Superdome and any memories he has from that experience and what it means for him to go back to his home state for the NFC Championship)

"I actually, funny enough, I won three state championships there as well. So, I have a historic history there. I've had a lot of success in that building and that building really means a lot to me just because a lot of my athletic career has been played in that building. In high school, I had the opportunity to play in four state championships there and win three of them. To win a national championship there in college was amazing and just an electric atmosphere. LSU is so close – it was basically a home game for us in that national championship. But, those are fond memories of that stadium. I say it all the time, Superdome is probably, to me, the place that I'll always have the best emotional ties just because of my athletic career there. So, I'm excited for this opportunity because it's going to be a challenge, but man, that's why you play the game. What a cool place to have the opportunity to go try and win it."

(On how he prepares for the noise at the Superdome)

"I think you just continue to rep it as much as you can during the week. Also, we've had an extensive amount of experience with that. We've played in some tough places over the last two years, really. Playing in Minnesota – having the opportunity to play there. Playing in Seattle twice. Having the opportunity to go down to New Orleans this year. We've played in some of the louder stadiums in the league. So, we have some experience with that and I think that's something that's good for us because it creates the opportunity that we've been in those situations. We understand – we've played some really big road games. Just things that have happened that we've ended up with some really big wins in places that mean a lot. Last year and this year are no different. So, we look forward to that opportunity. I think that you've got to look forward to challenges. We know it's an advantage for them, but it gives us the opportunity to have just a little edge more of understanding, 'Hey, you know what? How big execution's going to be this week.'"

(On if he can relay to some of the younger teammates how important and special of an opportunity it is to play in the NFC Championship)

"Yeah, I think you have to continue that throughout the year. Really, to continue to be a presence where guys understand – it gives me a great opportunity playing 13 years in the league, to have a chance throughout the season, really, to talk to guys about, 'Man, understand what it's like to start a season 4-0, 5-0, 6-0,' as it went on. Really, to have those discussions throughout the year of how hard it is to be successful and don't take this for granted. It's something that's extremely hard. I've had the opportunity of starting seasons 8-0 twice and I've had the opportunity of also starting seasons 0-8. So, I know that you can never take any of these moments for granted. I think that's something that's not really a 'now' thing. It's something

that throughout the year, who you are and how you lead, you continue to remind guys how precious time is and to never take moments in their life for granted."

(On how much credit he gives to Run Game Coordinator Aaron Kromer for game-planning)

"Well, I think a lot of it's made of, really, just that with Dallas (Cowboys) last week. The truth is, that's every single week in the NFL – you're finding tells and things that make you feel confident that certain things are happening on the football field. As an offensive lineman and a quarterback, you better or we're going to get hit in the face a whole bunch. So, I think that's a big part of what we do all week – it's studying defenses, understanding what they like to do and what their habits are and those kinds of things. (Run Game Coordinator) Coach (Aaron) Kromer's definitely the center point of all that happening. I can't say enough about the job that Kromer's done. Really, just how amazing of a coach he's been all season long. It never ceases to really amaze me. Every single week, it's like something happens, whether it's a high or a low – how he handles it, how he, really, directs our group. I can't say enough about Aaron Kromer and the job he's done. He's a tremendous football coach and somebody in this league that I think deserves a ton of respect for the job he does."

(On helping the offense have 273 rushing yards against the Cowboys last week and if that means they peaked at the right time)

"Well, I think you really look at your season and you don't make excuses for things that have happened or really what's going on throughout the year. But, it's funny to sit here in the playoffs and felt like going into the Divisional Round that we had to convince people that we were good being 13-3 and starting a season the way did, it's wild. I mean, we lost two games and then all of a sudden, it's like the world fell down. It's one of those things that I think, really, we felt like throughout the year – if you really look at our team as a whole and our group – there's a lot of adversity we faced. Through things that have happened around us in our community, through things that happened in L.A., through places we had to travel to, go to, do to overcome, injuries – all those things – to guys that are instrumental in our leadership. So, we feel like we're battle-tested. Honestly, we feel like we've been through it. There's really not much adversity we haven't seen all year long, whether it's travel stuff or anything. So, I think we kind of feel like we were born for this moment and this opportunity. This season, we've done nothing but put our heads down and work and we got the opportunity that now, we're getting back to getting hot and feeling good about ourselves. Man, it's going to be two of the best teams in our conference. We're going to go at it and we'll see what happens."

(On if he agrees with Kromer saying they found the fountain of youth against the Cowboys last game and if he felt a lot fresher than he had in previous games)

"Yeah, I think throughout the year, obviously, you have different seasons where things – ail you or don't. Every year, I can think of the different injuries I've had to overcome in certain seasons. Obviously this one, playing 11 games straight and not really having a bye week there in the middle – different things that you got. Whether it's different ankles or arms or whatever that bothers you, you kind of have a long stretch there where you're overcoming it. So, you really look at where we are in our season, right? We had a bye in Week 12 and then we got an opportunity to kind of come back from that long stretch and we're a little sluggish. Then we found our feet again and started feeling good and then we got to rest again all of the sudden. So, I think that, honestly for us – to me – I feel like it's the beginning of the season body-wise. I feel great. I think a lot of us feel that way. I think that – our staff, between (Senior Director, Sports Medicine and Performance) Reggie Scott and (Director of Strength Training and Performance) Ted Rath, have done an amazing job of preparing us and getting us to this opportunity. I think physically we feel awesome."

(On how this is a different team than the one that lost to the Saints in Week 9)

"I think you look at the season and, really, how it's gone. I think this team is a lot more confident than that one. I think this team has continued to progress throughout the progression of the season and say, 'Hey, you know what? I feel like right now, we're our best version of ourselves and what can we do to continue to grow and continue to do to get better?' I think that's the attitude this team has. It doesn't feel like, 'Oh man, we've got to go get lucky or we've got to have something go our way.' I think we feel like, 'Hey, how can we go out this week, play the best game we can possibly play and see where it all stacks up when it's over.' I think that's, really, the mentality we have this week is that – what is there to lose? We're going on the road. Every advantage there is, is in their favor. We'll just go down swinging."