



LOS ANGELES RAMS

Rams Head Coach Sean McVay – Media Availability – January 21, 2019

(On his reaction to playing the New England Patriots in the Super Bowl)

"A lot of respect for them. They've been doing it as consistently as any organization in the history of this league. Gotten a chance to get to know (Patriots Head) Coach (Bill) Belichick a little bit. Had a relationship with (Patriots Offensive Coordinator) Josh McDaniels. Really, we practiced against those guys when I was in Washington early on and kind of kept in contact with them. They're a team that you're always watching the way they do things and you just have so much respect for the way that they've operated over the last handful of years. So, it's going to be a great challenge – something that we'll get started on as soon as we end up here."

(On the defensive line clicking over the last two games and what it is about the group that has been able to come together in the playoffs)

"I just think they play consistent. I think they hit blocks the right way. I think when you start inside out, (DT) Ndamukong Suh and (DT) Aaron (Donald) and (DL Michael) Brockers have been outstanding. I think (OLB) Samson (Ebukam) and (OLB) Dante (Fowler Jr.) have both brought a physical presence to our edges. I just think then, that enables the secondary and some of our guys in the back end, to be able to be a little bit freer. But, I think the way that they're disrupting things – they're getting people off combination blocks. You can see, when you get disconnected on different levels up front, whether you're in protection or in some of these zone schemes, it makes it really tough to run the football and obviously, to protect if they're getting push in the pocket. I think Ndamukong Suh stacked another great performance on another one. Aaron made big-time plays. Michael Brockers – I thought the tip pass that he had in the overtime period was a really big play for us. Then, Dante being able to force that ball that gets tipped. Samson's flying around. So, it's a credit to those guys and I think (Defensive Coordinator) Wade (Phillips) and our defensive coaches have done an excellent job putting them in good spots."

(On going against Patriots QB Tom Brady, especially in a Super Bowl setting)

"Yeah, really similar to (Saints QB) Drew Brees. You're talking about guys that have been doing it as consistent as anybody. You just look at the amount of Super Bowl appearances that he's had. Just the way that he competes is understanding. The way that he plays the quarterback position the right way. When you're teaching that position or coaching that position, whether it's Drew or (Patriots QB) Tom (Brady), these are guys that they look – this is what it's supposed to look like when you're playing that position at a high level, with the decision making, the timing, the rhythm, the accuracy, the ownership of what they're trying to get done. I have so much respect for him and he's an elite competitor that, it's going to be a great challenge, just like Drew Brees was for us last week."

(On how he feels about the way RB Todd Gurley II and RB C.J. Anderson handled splitting carries again)

"Yeah, I think that I for sure should've done a better job of getting (RB) Todd (Gurley II) more involved. I think the opportunities were so limited, whether it be a couple of things in the pass game. I thought one of the things that doesn't show up is, if you watch some of the two-minute drills when they were bringing some zone dogs – different things like that – watching the way that Todd Gurley ends up putting his face on people in protection, enabling Jared to be able to sit in the pocket, make a third-and-10 conversion to (WR) Brandin Cooks on a big-time drive that leads to a touchdown. You look at some of the things in the last two-

minute drives, him making big-time pickups. He catches a check down that enables us to continue to move the ball. So, he did a lot of good things. We didn't get as many attempts as we would've liked to. That's where that Dallas (Cowboys) game, you're so appreciative of the efficiency that we were able to operate with. But, credit New Orleans. They did a good job. I thought (RB) C.J. (Anderson) had some tough, hard runs, but I definitely think I should've gotten Todd a little bit more involved. But again, like the flow of the game, we've got to do kind of what we think is in our best interest. If anything that you love so much about Todd and I think it epitomizes what's right about our football team, is the ownership that he talks about with regards to, I've got to play a little bit better. I also think that it is a result of the opportunities. He didn't have a lot of opportunities to play much better, so I think that's where I've got some ownership in that as well. The great thing about it is, he'll get a chance to make a big-time contribution and have a big role in our game against the Patriots."

(On if the two-week preparation allows him to enhance his strategy)

"Really, this is the first time that I've coached in a Super Bowl, so you lean heavily on coaches in our building, even some of the players that have had experiences with this. For the most part, what we'll try to do just based on the understanding that I have with regards to some of the things that you have to do in Atlanta – all the other things that take place – you really want to kind of treat it like a normal game week this week, understanding that you'll continue to tweak your gameplan once you get to Atlanta. But, we want to try to get the majority of our plan in this week so that you can try to be cognizant of the distractions that'll take place and not really try to overload our players with a lot of new information that isn't necessarily indicative of – we don't want these guys thinking, we want them to be able to go play, be decisive and that's kind of the approach that we'll take. So, it'll be more similar to a normal game week, with the addition of tightening things up that following week."

(On him being at the Super Bowl in 2002 and what he remembers from that experience)

"I was so young at the time, but I remember it was a great game. I remember, for whatever reason, I really always respected both the offenses. I thought (Former RB) Eddie George was outstanding. (Former QB) Steve McNair's ability to create off-schedule. (Former DE) Jevon Kearse, that was his rookie year where he was having a lot of success. Then, you look offensively at (Former QB) Kurt Warner and how prolific he was. I can still remember (Former WR) Torry Holt catching that slant. (Former WR) Isaac Bruce making big plays. (Former RB) Marshall's (Faulk) versatility. Just a fan of the game and watching that. I'll tell you what's so unique, is you get a chance to be in this role and the exposure that it gets you to people that you have so much respect for. (Former Head) Coach (Dick) Vermeil is a guy that, he texts you after all the games and he's been so supportive. Watching the way that he connected with those guys and wasn't afraid to say, 'I love you', to these guys. I think those players could feel how much he really cared about them and how much he was invested. You talk about some of the adversity that that team, specifically being our organization, faced early on in the year when no one gave him a chance, but they kept believing. Kurt Warner went on to have such a great season. I also remember it was very icy then, so it was a real problem for us to get there, but it was a great game. My grandpa got us tickets and that was a good birthday present for me."

(On if he can recite the entire 2001 Super Bowl by memory)

"No. No, definitely not (laughs)."

(On WR Josh Reynolds 16-yard end-around catch and if he borrowed that play from the Chiefs game against the Colts in the Divisional Round)

"They had run something similar, that we actually ran the same play to (WR) Josh (Reynolds) the week before for an 8-yard gain. You're talking about (Chiefs WR) Tyreek Hill's 35-yard touchdown? Yeah. So that one had a little bit extra something on it because it had a fly motion in addition to (TE Tyler) Higbee coming back across the formation. So, again, like everything else it's similar but then you kind of add a little bit of juice on it or a little spin that fits our offense. It was a big time play by Josh. It might have been close if we had reviewed it. He might have been going in at that point. But it was a very similar approach to what you're trying to attack the defense with. It was a similar play but a subtle little tweak there."

(On if he's gotten a sense of what this trip to the Super Bowl means to Los Angeles)

"You know what, it's hard to say because we got back so late. But I do think that this city has had such a history of great sports success. We've talked about trying to be able to play in a way that makes this city proud. I think this city has definitely made us feel embraced. I've certainly felt embraced since we've gotten here as a coaching staff over the last two years. What a great opportunity it's going to be to play for a World Championship."

(On the first thing his dad said to him after punching their ticket to the Super Bowl)

"I think he was excited, man. I could tell that my mom and my girlfriend had been crying, they were so happy. Shoot my dad, who knows? He was more worried probably about chest bumping all the players afterwards then coming and seeing me (laughs). He was excited though. It's a pretty cool thing right now."

(On growing up in Atlanta and now returning as a Head Coach in the Super Bowl)

"Yeah, it's wild. There's a lot of people in Atlanta that mean a lot to me that I have great relationships with, but I think this is about the Rams getting an opportunity to go compete. It happens to be in Atlanta, you know, our focus and concentration will be on going there to try to go win a football game. It's a blessing to be able to get back there and see some people but this about our football team. And if anything, it will probably cause me an even bigger headache with all the people that – you know I didn't realize how many friends I had from Atlanta until yesterday. So, I don't know if that's a good or a bad thing (laughs)."

(On if he had any follow-up comments on the controversial no call)

"Yes. The one thing that I think is when you slow it down, clearly you can see some of the things that took place. I think that if you want to do that on every single play though there's a lot of instances. You want to slow some different things down, with a face mask on (QB Jared) Goff, on some different things. What we try to do a good job of is understand that it's an imperfect game. I feel bad for when it occurred in the framework of the game, but I thought (Saints Head Coach) Sean (Payton) said it best too where, there's a lot of other opportunities and there's a lot of things that do dictate and determine the outcome of the game. Whatever happens after that, if it is called differently, you just never know. All we can do is control what we can control, and in a lot of instances those things are out of our control. One of the things that I've loved about our team is whether we feel like a call works in our favor or against it, they just keep competing, eyes up, next play mindset and mentality. I'm not going to shy away from the fact that I did think it was a bang-bang play after the game. But when you slow it down, I'm not going to sit here and say there clearly wasn't a little bit of contact before that ball actually arrived. But whether he catches it or not, there's a lot of things that go into that. That one did work in our favor, but there were a couple instances where it didn't, and we can't control those things."

(On if RB Todd Gurley II is still hurt and what the Patriots do well offensively and defensively)

"To start, (RB) Todd (Gurley II) is healthy and he's feeling good. He sure looked pretty healthy on that touchdown run where he ran through guys and demonstrated some explosion and what we know about him. I just think, really more than anything, I've got to get him more opportunities. Credit the Saints defense, too. They did some things to limit some of those opportunities. Like I said, that atmosphere and environment was incredible. They definitely did a great job of affecting some of the things early on with regards to how we can operate. I thought the players handled it, for the most part, pretty well. That's a really, really well-coached team, excellent organization. You see why they were the number one seed, had the best record in the league and you've got nothing but respect for those guys. As far as for the Patriots, I know that they do an excellent job specific to gameplanning where they've got the ability to understand from a defensive standpoint, 'All right, how can we manipulate your protections? How can we play a variety of coverage principles that take away what that team does best?' They're going to identify a couple things that they say, 'All right' – (Patriots Head) Coach (Bill) Belichick's the best at this – 'What do the Rams do best and how are we going to say we're not coming out of this game letting them beat us doing this?' That's why we've got to be aware of what are those things. I think that our players have done a nice job specific to the offense demonstrating (QB) Jared (Goff) spreads the ball around. You get seven different guys involved whether it's running the football, five different guys catching it that Jared spread it around too. Really, actually more than that when you include the backs, but all the tight ends, the receivers that were playing got involved in the game. We've had the ability to run or throw it. So, we'll see what kind of approach that they want to be able to take, but you know that they've got a great understanding of how to attack you and make you feel like, all right, you're in defense mode when you're on offense. Then specific to the offense, again, very

similar where they've got the ability to personnel group you, change some different things specific to how they want to attack a defense. Obviously, Tom's (Brady) understanding and the experience that he has with seeing a variety of different defensive structures is what makes him unique. His ability to throw the ball with accuracy, anticipation. The level of detail that they operate, whether it be in their screen game, their ability to run out of two backs, their ability to run it out of one-back looks, spread you out into empty formations and get to some 'Check with me's' at the line of scrimmage. They're not limited in any way. I think they've very similar in terms of the way that New Orleans applies pressure to you. But, that approach and that intricate understanding of, 'All right, what can we do to really apply pressure?' Whether it be on offense to the opposing defense, whether it be their defense to the offense and then some of the intricate things that they do specific to special teams with Coach Belichick's history as a special teams coordinator is why they've been one of the teams that everybody's saying, 'This might be the year for the Patriots.' And here they are again in the Super Bowl playing their best ball when it matters the most. Really impressed with watching what they did against the (Los Angeles) Chargers with how good and how complete the Chargers were as a team. Then, to go into Arrowhead (Stadium) and do what they did, unbelievable. So, it's going to be fun, but it's going to be a great challenge for us without a doubt."

(On some of the keys in terms of preparing the team to peak 13 days from today)

"I think it's really about making sure that you try to get ahead as much as you can, eliminate some of the distractions that inevitably occur just based on the nature of the magnitude of the game and then all the different people or friends and family that the players, the coaches want to take care of. So, try to knock those things out early on in the week. Try to get a good jump start on your gameplan where you're almost treating it as if you're playing this upcoming week. Then, really, just tightening the screws. That's where to rely heavily on (Senior Director of Sports Medicine and Performance) Reggie (Scott) and (Director of Strength Training and Performance) Ted (Rath) and those guys to be able to help set up practice plans that are conducive for peaking at the right time in a couple weeks, but not ignoring the fact that this is a big-time game. There's a lot of other things going on, but our sole focus and concentration has got to be on enjoying the moment, but making sure that we're going to try to win a football game. That's what we've got to keep the main thing the main thing. I think if we do that, everything else will fall into place, but it's going to take a great performance and it's going to take a great couple weeks of preparation to get ready for what's really been the standard around this league for the last handful of years."

(On what areas he has seen WR Josh Reynolds improve on to help fill the void left by injured WR Cooper Kupp)

"What he does – (WR) Robert (Woods) really kind of slid into (WR) Cooper's (Kupp) position, but what (WR) Josh (Reynolds) has done is just continue to get better and better. You talk about a guy that made some big-time plays in some big-time moments yesterday. He's catching an in-breaking route versus a quarters-type structure that typically, that's a bad play-call by me. But, Jared has the confidence to let it rip and then Josh aggressively crossing face in the drive that ended up leading to us kicking the field goal to tie it to send it into overtime. Made another big-time play on the run. He's competing without the ball. You look at the little wheel route that he caught down the sideline. He's just delivered on his opportunities and whether that's competing with or without the ball. I think he's a great route-runner. I think he's got good, aggressive hands and for a player of his size, I think what we like so much about him coming out of Texas A&M was the body control. The way that he's able to work edges, he can open his stride up and put it down where that enables him to seamlessly separate. But, I just think you're seeing a guy capitalize on his opportunities. I think, really, what you love about our younger players is it seems like whether it was him – or even we were talking about with (TE) Gerald Everett – no moment is too big for those guys. They made some big-time plays in clutch moments yesterday that ended up leading to a positive outcome for the Rams."

(On how the team came out of Sunday's game from a health standpoint)

"Good. We came out good, so it's going to be – we're pretty much in a good place right now. Just your typical bumps and bruises after a physical game like that, but we don't anticipate anybody really missing any time. (DB) Blake (Countess) had a little plantar fascia with his foot, but I think that he should be good to go."

(On the NFL Films video of Ted Rath following him up the sideline to make sure he doesn't bump into any officials and how he was the lucky guy to land that job)

"Well, I think he's the most mentally tough guy that knows that – because what they did leave on that video was some of the times when he's grabbing me like that and I said, 'What the – what are you doing on that?' But, he's kept me out of harm's way where if you bump into those officials, you're talking about a legitimate personal foul. So, he's great at what he does and like you said, it's a nice little dance that we play that I don't even know I have partner behind me (laughs)."