



LOS ANGELES RAMS

Rams Head Coach Sean McVay – Media Availability – January 25, 2019

(On his reaction to the league fining CB Nickell Robey-Coleman, if he has talked to him and if he's worried about this becoming a distraction at the Super Bowl)

"No, these are things that come up every week where in a lot of instances, sometimes it goes unreported if a player gets fined based on the way that the league office sees some of the things that take place during the course of the game. Unfortunately, sometimes that's just kind of common nature that you go through week-in and week-out. But, no, we're certainly not going to allow that to be a distraction."

(On if Robey-Coleman received any further discipline besides the fine)

"No, nothing like that."

(On what he can do to help RB Todd Gurley II get going for the Super Bowl)

"Well, I think a lot of it is predicated on giving him some opportunities based on some of the play selections, different ways to get him involved. That's not exclusive to the running game, but we'll see how the gameplan plays out. We've still got some time. I think the point is, is that you want to be able to give (RB) Todd (Gurley II) more opportunities. He can only do so much when you get four attempts carrying the football and a couple opportunities where it's just not real clean looks. So, that's where you feel like you have an obligation. Then, like we did the week before, when we're able to have some continuity, sustain some drives, that's when you get more opportunities to get a variety of different people involved, not necessarily just the running backs. Any time that you have a player like Todd Gurley on your team, I've got to do a better job of getting him involved and getting him into the flow of the game. That's something that I have to be accountable for."

(On what kind of luxury it was to have Gurley when he first arrived in Los Angeles and developing the offense)

"When you've got a player like Todd, you're not limited in any way that you can use him. Any time that you have somebody that's as versatile as he is that can really play all over the formation – he can run, he can protect, he can win individual route isolations whether he's coming out of the backfield or he's lined up detached from the core in the slot outside. So, it's fun to be able to have great players, but what we've also talked about is not only is he a great player, he's extremely smart, works hard. He represents what's right about how you handle yourself as a teammate, as a leader. You love being around guys like that. I think guys like Todd are part of the reason – because we've got a handful of players like that – why we're getting the chance to play in this game."

(On the level of confidence it creates in him as a coach having a special teams unit that can make plays to dramatically impact or win games)

"It's huge. Really, you have such confidence in (Special Teams Coordinator) John Fassel and (Assistant Special Teams Coach) Matt Daniels to do a great job leading our special teams. Then, the guys play so hard. We've got really good football players in all of our phases of special teams, but then when you talk about the core guys with (P) Johnny (Hekker), (K) Greg (Zuerlein) and (LS) Jake (McQuaide) that have been here, they've had continuity over their last seven years, I want to say. It's a big boost. It enables us to be more aggressive because of the confidence that you have where you can do some different things, really specific to kind of what (ESPN reporter) Lindsey (Thiry) was asking about Todd. What Johnny enables you to be able to do because he can throw, because he can run, that's one of the things that, in a lot of instances,

you can present a lot of things when you're punting the football or when you're kicking a field goal with him being the holder."

(On what point in his preparation he gets into the game day operations, such as the extended halftime period and staying on the field longer for the National Anthem)

"That's something that our guys have already started to talk about in terms of how we handle getting warmed up. I was actually talking with (Senior Director of Sports Medicine and Performance) Reggie (Scott) and (Director of Strength Training and Performance) Ted (Rath) about that. Just making sure that we get everything in alignment, in order to be able to handle that accordingly. So, we've kind of gotten ahead on that, but in terms of delivering that information to the players, that'll be something that we'll hit on next week."

(On how he has prepared his offensive skill players for the Patriots' tendency to play physical against receivers and running backs)

"That's definitely something that's different. You can see, there's a clear-cut philosophy – whether it's their edge rushers with a peel mentality wanting to disrupt the backs releasing out of the backfield, any time you're in reduced splits. They'll a lot of times substitute some of the edge rush to disrupt the integrity of the way that you try to space the field in the pass game. When they play a lot of their zone principles, it's the same thing. Typically, you see these vision zones where they're QB key 'ball out, break' and a lot of their stuff, it's predicated on disrupting the timing and rhythm, even with some underneath zoning defenders. That's something that's kind of been a staple of the way that they've operated defensively. There's a clear-cut philosophy. That's what you respect so much about these guys, is you can see how sound their principles are, you can see their identities and how their players have an ownership on that and that enables them to be able to execute at a high level – that's defense, that's offense, that's special teams. When you have that, there's different ways to do it. But, when there's a clear-cut philosophy, the players have that clarity and I think a lot of times the best thing you can provide from a coaching standpoint is the clarity where the players can go play without any uncertainty and just go react, specifically on defense when so much of that reactionary. It's definitely an issue and it's something that we've got to be aware of, for sure."

(On the team saw in TE Gerald Everett and how he has developed during his couple seasons with the team)

"When you flipped his tape on, unbelievable athlete. Got a chance to spend a little bit of time with him at the (NFL Scouting) Combine. When you watched some film, he's able to echo and articulate what's going on. A smart player. But, I think the run after the catch. That athleticism – very rarely can I think of any time I've time I've seen the first player take him down in the open field. He's got great aggressive hands. He's from Atlanta, we went and worked him out as part of the pre-draft process. You could just see, a player of his size, his physicality, but to have the body control, the catch radius and then the ability to separate and work edges on people. That was something that was really intriguing to us. He's gotten better and better. I think he's done an excellent job. (Pass Game Coordinator) Coach (Shane) Waldron is a great coach and, really, you've seen the tight end group as a whole continue to develop under his leadership and guidance. Gerald is a special talent. You look at the play that he made against Kansas City, made a couple big-time catches last week. I thought the little option route where he catches it on a second-and-10, breaks inside and is able to finish lowering his pads on people for a first down. Then, obviously, the third-down-and-3 off-schedule play where he comes back to the ball and then runs for a 30-plus-yard gain. He's a great player. He's getting better and better and he's only going to become more important to us as he gains that experience."

(On what he has seen from S John Johnson III, how he has been able to utilize his versatility and what CB Aqib Talib brings to the team)

"Really, when you talk about both (S) John Johnson (III) and (CB) Aqib (Talib) – starting with John – one of the things that's enabled him to be such a good player is the versatility he had at Boston College. He's playing cornerback, he's playing nickel, he's playing safety. He's got great ball skills, good body control. I think he's a great wrap-tackler. He's got a good feel to negotiate through space and traffic and be able to make some of those types of plays. Certain guys just have a knack for being in the right place at the right time and that's kind of what John's been. Really, when he first got his opportunity, he had a little bit of a – he had a quad or a hamstring (injury) when he first got here in a minicamp. That kind of delayed him getting

a chance to compete in the offseason program his rookie year and then he just got more and more comfortable. You start noticing it more and more throughout the course of camp. Then, really, he makes a big-time play in his first year against Dallas in the two-minute drive to be able to, in essence, win the game. Then, he started his first game against Seattle, makes a big-time pick based on his preparation, his recognition with what Seattle was doing on some of their quick-snap concepts. He read it and then ended up doing a great job flipping the field for us, getting a turnover. But, he's just gotten better and better. I think his communication, his understanding, the way that he prepares, the concept recognition and then the situational awareness matched up with his athleticism is what has enabled John to be such a successful player. He's only going to get better and better, similar to what we're talking about with Gerald. And a lot of those things that you love about John Johnson is why Aqib Talib has been able to sustain at such a high level for such a long period of time. Incredibly smart player. Just got a knack and a feel for the game. He's got a lot of experience in this system, some of the coverage contours, some of the principles and how he understands how to use help or communicate to his teammates – whether that be a safety, a linebacker – with whatever coverage we're in and how that offensive set dictates what those calls and communications are. Just that situational awareness again. Certain guys, like John – Aqib's the same way – have a knack for making plays. You look at the play that he made in Philly, when we're playing Philly. That play enabled us to get back in that game even though we didn't end up pulling it out. Aqib is just refreshingly himself, too. He doesn't have to – I think the best thing about Aqib, he's not trying to be somebody that is a charismatic presence where people are drawn to him. He's just that because of who he is. I think what resonates with players is somebody that's themselves, that's secure enough in themselves to not try to be anybody other than themselves, where they're comfortable enough in their own skin just to go about their business. He loves football. He likes being in these atmospheres and I think that's why people like being around him and I'm sure glad that he's with us."

(On if he has or will reach out to his coaching colleagues who have won Super Bowls – such as Mike Shanahan or Jon Gruden – to discuss some of the intangibles of the process)

"Absolutely. Those guys, they're so great to me – when you talk about (former Redskins Head Coach) Mike (Shanahan) and (Raiders Head Coach) Jon (Gruden). They both reached out to just congratulate you. My grandpa's a great reference as well. He'll be at the game. What he's meant to me and to our family and just the way that he's handled himself and the perspective that he has, where he's seen it from both ends of the spectrum where he's been a coach. He's also had an intricate role from a front office standpoint and he's been a part of a championship organization that was able to sustain for a long period of time. Certainly, you rely on those people, but you also rely heavily on the coaching staff that we do have in place or even some of our players that have gone through this. So, I think it's a balance of making sure you utilize those people that have been great mentors to you, but you want to be careful overloading information and then not being afraid of the fact that you've got great people in this building that can help us put together a plan, handle the situation accordingly that we're confident that hopefully we'll perform well and it will lead to a win for us."

(On how DT Aaron Donald has performed in the playoffs, if he expects a breakout performance by him in the Super Bowl and if he will have to go to training camp next season)

"He better with all that money we're paying him (laughs). Jeez. Maybe he wouldn't have had to wait to really get into a flow. But, no, (DT) Aaron (Donald) has been unbelievable. I think when you really look at it, the stats can be misleading with regards to the production and the influence that a defensive player is having on the game. In a lot of instances, if it's a six-man protection where the (offensive) line has got to determine in a four-man front which way they're sliding, he's often times occupying a double that enables (DT) Ndamukong (Suh) and (OLB) Dante Fowler (Jr.) to be singled up on the man side of the protection. So, he might split a double or he might occupy those guys and then that's where you see those other people really show up. But, Aaron still has made those splash plays. Really, if (Saints RB Alvin) Kamara doesn't fall back on that fumble, he gets into the backfield quicker than you can realize what's going on. So, Aaron has played really good football and he has impacted and influenced the game against Dallas and really against New Orleans in a variety of different ways. It's not exclusive to just the things you see on the stat sheet, but if you just watch play-in and play-out, how is he – whether it's moving (Saints QB Drew) Brees off of his spot, whether it's forcing (Cowboys QB) Dak (Prescott) to get flushed, whether it's making (Cowboys RB) Ezekiel (Elliott), at the point of attack in the run game, bounce in another gap to where now they're out-leveraged. So, he's done a lot of those things. Ndamukong has been great and, really, I think our defense

as a whole has been outstanding. Our coaching staff has put together plans that we feel like have put us in a position to go win football games and stop two very productive offenses. This week is going to be a very, very great challenge for us, but we're hopeful that we'll be able to finish this season off with another outstanding performance from our defense and from those guys."

(On what he has learned from Defensive Coordinator Wade Phillips throughout this preparation process)

"I think just to be consistent. Then, he was able to draw on some of the experiences that he had, whether it be in Denver with how they handled kind of having that two-week build up where in a lot of times – especially for somebody like me – you can have a little bit too much time where you overthink things. I think being able to kind of give that perspective of how do we want to set up the first week of preparation, what are some of the things that we can expect in that second week with regards to the distractions, but also making sure you keep the main thing the main thing with getting ready for the football game. There's so many different things. Then, just the way that he goes about his daily business, how much he enjoys this. Sometimes I can have a tendency to forget how much fun and what a blessing it is to be doing this. Seeing the way that (Defensive Coordinator) Wade (Phillips) handles himself is a great representation of what it looks like to enjoy what a blessing it is to be coaching in this league and to make sure you maximize every day."

(On how important WR Robert Woods' versatility has been after WR Cooper Kupp got hurt)

"It's incredible. I even go back to when we lost (WR) Brandin (Cooks) and (WR) Cooper (Kupp) in the first half of the Seattle (Seahawks) game in Week 5. The leadership that he had for that group, to be able to help (WR) Josh (Reynolds) and both, (WR) KhaDarel Hodge step in and seamlessly transition, his ability to communicate. He's been incredible. When you talk about, there's some really great receivers in this league and there's a lot of great players all over, but with regards to what we ask (WR) Robert Woods to do, whether that's being an outstanding receiver that can run all the route tree, separating verse man, going down the field catching deep balls, carrying the ball in jet sweeps – we even give him the ball in some of the gap-and-trap type concepts, where he's playing like a running back. Then, he's short-motion and he's inserting like a lead fullback. So, the amount of things that he does, I can't put into words how valuable Robert Woods is. The way that he comes to work every single day has been impressive and we're so thankful to have him and he means a whole lot to our football team. He's done such a great job this year in so many ways that don't show up, even though he's had great production with 1,200-plus yards receiving and all that. But, his contribution to our offense is outstanding."

(On if he ever studied Patriots QB Tom Brady while growing up and if he ever put himself in Brady's in-game situations when he was playing as a youth)

"I think, you're just such a fan of the game – that (Patriots QB) Tom's (Brady) been doing it for so long, he's certainly one of those guys when you watch – I think the type of competitor that he was. I don't know that I probably had the perspective back then to really think about it from that standpoint. But, what you did respect, was a guy that no moment was too big for him. You talk about the mental toughness that you want to display. Whether, they were behind or whether it was in those crunch-time moments, he seemed to always be at his best. You can remember the run where, he ends up stepping in when (former Patriots QB Drew) Bledsoe had gotten hurt earlier in the year when (former Jets linebacker) Mo Lewis had knocked him out. He just did a great job sustaining. Did a great job distributing the ball, taking care of it and he's only gotten better and better. His career speaks for itself. But, I'm so much a fan of this game and what Tom's done is unbelievable."