



LOS ANGELES RAMS

Rams Head Coach Sean McVay – Media Availability – January 26, 2019

(On K Greg Zuerlein)

"He's making good progress. One day at a time, but he's feeling good. No setbacks with that, so all things are pointing in the right direction for us."

(On if he has one memory or event that he loved most from Marist High School)

"Yeah, to be able to win a state championship my senior year with the coaches and with some of my closest friends in the world who – they were at the game last week. You saw them picking me up afterwards and throwing me around. That was a special memory. To be able to achieve something with people that you care about are things you always remember. That's why, hopefully, we'll be able to do that with this group next Sunday. Any time you win a championship, that's always fun."

(On what he has observed between Defensive Coordinator Wade Phillips and CB Aqib Talib throughout the season as they have reunited)

"I just think there's a mutual respect that exists. Those are two guys where (CB) Aqib (Talib) has been playing at a high level for a long time. (Defensive Coordinator) Wade (Phillips) has been coaching at a high level for a long time, and I think there's a mutual respect and an appreciation for one another's skill set that enables them to be really good at their job. They're also pretty easy to get along with. So, I think it starts with the mutual respect. Wade's got such a good way about being able to connect with players, give them some ownership. I think about a situation before Aqib was even here with us where Wade told me about a situation where it was a two-minute, end of the half type deal. Kansas City had the ball. Aqib suggested a certain play call because of some of the things that he had anticipated situationally and he was able to jump it and end up getting an interception. I think when you've got that rapport with your players and coaches it's pretty special and those two have that."

(On Phillips saying that you won't fool Patriots QB Tom Brady, but you have to out-play him and if it's a similar circumstance with Patriots Head Coach Bill Belichick)

"Yeah, I think so. I think because of that experience, when those guys are so great at what they do and then they have that inventory that they have to draw on is so broad because of that experience. (Patriots QB) Tom (Brady) has seen so many different things and he's been able to adjust. He's got such a great feel for understanding how to manipulate, move coverage, handle certain situations where he might have to redirect a protection or throw quick-element throws if he is hot. Then, the same thing with (Patriots Head) Coach (Bill) Belichick. I can't imagine that there's really a scheme that he hasn't seen or hasn't had to defend, because really, all the stuff that we're running is some form of another play that we had already seen. I know none of these are plays that I've made up. That certainly is the case for both those guys without a doubt."

(On what it has been like seeing Zuerlein deal with injuries the past two seasons and what he brings to the team when he is healthy)

"Well, what he brings to the team is he's a great guy, but as soon as you cross the 50 (-yard line), you legitimately feel like you're in a position to come away with points. What he did his first year that we were here as a staff – Special Teams Player of the Year. Even though he ended up missing a couple games at the end, he still ended up leading the league in scoring. He was outstanding. But, I just think his resolve,

his mental toughness – watching the way that he handled being out earlier in the year and how he was so supportive of the guys that were in his role, I think demonstrated a security that exists on his part. But, he's a really good, productive player and he's been outstanding. I think just how clutch he was last week, too. In that atmosphere, to be able to kick two of those field goals with the distance, but then also the crowd noise, the different things. He was unphased by it and we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for him."

(On what goes through his mind when he thinks back to OTAs to get to this point in the season)

"I just think it's been great to just watch this team progress. Even going back to when we first got back together in the offseason program and the progressive build. This is what you work for is to get a chance to be one of the last two practicing. We've got a few more that we want to maximize, but I think just watching this team continue to kind of have their own identity where the players, the coaches, it's about being connected, being a group that plays hard for one another, enjoys being around each other, but there's also a competitive nature. I think there's a swagger and a confidence that exists because of the way they go about their business every single day. One thing you know about just the NFL in general, there's always changes year-in and year-out. That's why you want to make sure that you maximize these moments and really appreciate the opportunity and what a blessing it is to still be practicing. Hopefully, it ends on a real positive note for us next week."

(On the margin of error being thin in playoff games and how he coaches his players to avoid making mistakes)

"I think it's the consistent theme of, you don't want to beat yourself. Good teams don't beat themselves. I think that's one of the reasons why the (New England) Patriots have been so good for so long. But, I also think there's an element of understanding it is an imperfect game and when those mistakes do inevitably occur or when we do have some adversity, we've got to handle the success and the adversity the same and have an eyes-up, positive, resilient mindset as we move forward. You want to try to avoid them at all costs, but if something does happen, this isn't the time to feel sorry for yourself. This is about, 'How do we respond? How do we pick each other up and have that next play mindset?' Especially in a game of this magnitude. But, really, we stay consistent with the things that we emphasize and approach. There's some specifics to the opponent, obviously. But, in terms of the situations, being smart, playing together, not beating ourselves – that's always going to be a big emphasis for us."

(On if he remembers where he first saw the jetsweep)

"I would say, the depth of when I first saw it was when (Former Rams WR) Tavon (Austin) was doing it, having a lot of success when I was in Washington. That was really where it started. It was one of the first things we did when we got here was, let's study Tavon – find different ways to get him involved because of the pressure that – I remember when Jim Haslett was our defensive coordinator in Washington, how much stress Tavon running those jetsweeps caused our defensive staff just based on some of the conflict and different things that it messes with. So, you kind of do some research and it really started as a way to just find a way to creatively get Tavon involved. I think it kind of evolved as the season went when you've got creative coaches like we do where guys bounce things off one another – continue to try to learn. How does this fit within the framework of what we're trying to do and it's, really, just kind of evolved. But, a lot of this is, these are things that other teams are doing around the league, too. Obviously, there's a big college influence where you see a lot of that. So, that was really the gist of it for me. I'm sure a lot of our other coaches probably had seen it and spent a little bit more time studying it than I have."

(On what kind of council he gives his team to enjoy this moment and balance it while being prepared and focused on the game itself)

"Yeah, I think you just said it. That's exactly what you say. Enjoy this opportunity, be smart, but let's not forget that we're here to try to win a football game. We want to have great focus and concentration when we are in those football things. Don't allow other things to take away from your focus. But, you do want to enjoy it. This is something that's special. When your family and friends get out there, we allocate some time for that. But, when we're dealing with football, we're focused and we're putting ourselves in a position to be at our best on Sunday. I think that's the expectation that these guys have. They know that. I think the ownership that our players have is what makes this team special because they kind of know, really, without us having to say, how we want to handle ourselves this week."

(On what it's like to have a player like RB Todd Gurley II to be so appreciative to have the opportunity to play in the Super Bowl and not care if he touches the ball)

"He's a special guy. I think, just the way (RB) Todd's (Gurley II) handled himself, not only this week, but overall, is one of those things that just make you feel so fortunate and you want to work that much harder to try to be in a position to try to help see these guys succeed. That's what's special about this group is that, they care about seeing each other succeed. But then, some of the guys that have been through some of the tougher times, I think there's probably a greater appreciation for the good times because you have a perspective on what it looks like from a different lens. Todd's certainly been appreciative of what this team has been able to do over the last couple years. The way that he's handled himself has been nothing but a stud, a pro and when you hear him talk, you can tell it's real. That's what you love about it. I've got a funny feeling he's going to be ready to go and play a big role in this game and do a great job for us."