

# Seattle Seahawks Media Conference

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## Kevin O'Connell

### Visitors Postgame Press Conference



Minnesota Vikings 27, Seattle Seahawks 24

KEVIN O'CONNELL: You know, it doesn't get much more greater than that, playing in one of the hardest places to come play, dealing with some elements and just finding a way to win a game. That's what this team has really been able to do all season long, some real performances to point out with Jets and Sam offensively and then Van with the two sacks, I thought Dallas Turner with the interception and Theo to close it, and being such two good teams to win that game, field position was going to play a critical role and that's part of what we thought that's what it would take to win the game, and our punt unit was fantastic and Will to be 3 of 3 in that kind of day, just critical. Really good execution. Far from perfect but this time of year, you've got to find a way to win these games and you learn a lot about your team. As I told them, it's a hell of an accomplishment to win 13 in this league and just proud of our guys, and the same type of feeling just keeps coming up. Very fortunate in this group, in this locker room, coaching staff, and now we've got to move on to the next.

#### **Q. What was that moment like when Sam throws the touchdown to Justin and you see the offensive lineman just enveloping him on the field?**

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Sam has had some huge plays this year, considering the circumstances, and kind of how that play kind of came to life, for him to move up and throw the ball, really on the move there with that kind of accuracy and to know where Justin was going to be in the moment, was a remarkable play. It doesn't get better than that. And I thought, as I told the team, his 12th time being over a hundred rating, which is a very, very significant number in our offense in this system, what has become Sam's offense, making some of the plays and throws he did, like you said it was far from perfect. There's a lot of things that we all can do better.

But you know, this is what it's going to take every 60-minute opportunity we have rest of the way to find a way to win football games. Big plays in big moments,

doing the little things, winning the turnover battle, winning the penalty ballot, field position bat the. Wasn't a great day running the football but a lot of really positive things that maybe might not jump out to a lot of football coaches but things we pour into to try to win football games every week.

#### **Q. Is Justin adjusting on that?**

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Yeah, it was a route adjustment there that those guys were on the same page.

#### **Q. Looked like parts of the drive Sam was having a hard time Herring.**

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Yeah, my head set went out. We had a great MVP performance from our sideline to get that. I got a new battery pack but yeah my head set went out completely which I thought was curious in that moment but you know, Sam was able to -- he scrambled on the play before. So I was able to talk to him coming off the sideline, get that play called, and by the time the next snap was up, I had a new pack on. So dealing with adversity.

#### **Q. Did he have a call there, where he was running?**

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Yeah, I was trying to get him -- I was trying to get him a call and my head set, the last thing he heard was the formation. So his ability to get a played called, and I've got to be honest with you, I don't know what he particularly called. I just know that when I saw him have space and go run like he did, I was relieved. I know what that play call is, QB run left (Laughter). What it seemed like.

#### **Q. To come off the field trailing and have that happen --**

KEVIN O'CONNELL: He's had some moments like that this year where just seems to be at his best in those moments. Like I said, there was a lot of things offensively I thought we could have done better, and that's all of us.

But there wasn't really one guy. I know I'm not speaking for myself, I thought we're going to go down and get a touchdown. The level of confidence that group has in their quarterback and the left of confidence in the ten guys in the huddle is significant and that's how you're able to go do that on the road in this place. You can't hear yourself think.



One of the critical things, I thought, was to try to win the penalty battle on the road in this environment, possibly some weather that our guys worked through in the first half it. Cleared up a little bit. Came back a little late but it was a pretty fantastic performance in that moment by not just our quarterback but all 11 of those guys out there.

**Q. How do you think defensively you adjusted --**

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Very mortgage term, it was truly a game-day decision with him and wanted to make sure -- Harrison is a guy that sometimes you've got to make the decision to sit him down. Otherwise, he's going to go. And we knew he was dealing with some significant soreness that just kind of never kind of turned over but we're expecting him to be fine and be ready to roll this week.

**Q. When Sam throws that touchdown in the moment, do you remember your reaction?**

KEVIN O'CONNELL: I do. I do. Because it was kind of an adjustment on the route based upon how Justin reacted in the moment. We had talked a little bit about that sequence. He would be on the back side and if they wanted to shove coverage over to him, we thought JA A or T.J. on the front side. But how it played out is he got such a clean, good release on the inside release he felt the vertical grass and took it, and in honor of Randy Moss, threw the mailbox sign up and Sam saw him as he climbed up in the pocket.

I want those guys to have some freedom in those moments, especially we do a lot of things with Justin and Sam, seeing the coverage, and then with some route opportunities to get to at the line of scrimmage, and I think those guys have just gotten so comfortable with that stuff that they are able to execute it like they did which was maybe the play, absolutely the play of the game, maybe even considering just a moment and the circumstances of the season as well.

**Q. You've got 13 wins, first Coach to do that in consecutive seasons in the team but to do it with different quarterbacks, how challenging has it been to reach those milestones?**

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Yeah, I mean, I've talked to this team a lot. I told them last night that it can be a very tired cliché to talk about going 1-0 until you've systematically built your entire operation daily of just trying to do that every single day. These guy, it's not a cliché at that point. It becomes part of your football foundation, and the makeup of your locker room, of your leadership, your coaching staff. Really, everybody that comes on these trips that that role in winning football games. That's what I wanted when I

came here. I wanted an organization where it felt like these kind of moments, whether big picture moments going into a season where football coaches don't necessarily have a lot of outward confidence of what this group is going to be able to accomplish, we just go to work and we try to improve, we have tremendous belief, sense of belonging and we start to really care deeply about what we do here, and in the process do all the little things that you do when you have the discipline to care about something like these players do.

**Q. Talk about the depth of the defense.**

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Flo and his guys have done a phenomenal job all year of preaching the next-man-up mentality when we need it. Hoping to have IP back in the coming days. But we have had guy after guy, whether for a game here or there or short-term stints getting healthy, we have had guys step up. Bobby really took a lot of the week on the defensive scout team because everybody just kind of assumed we would have 22 out there and Theo took a lot of reps, but to get that safety group ready and to communicate the way they did, that's why these guys are here. We preach to our guys a lot about no matter who it is, we are going to step in there and make the play. We have seen that happen a few times on offense this year. Speedy comes to mind. Josh comes to mind early on in the year, and it's just part of -- our left tackle right now is a perfect approximately of it. You might not be here for months or years but when we call on you, you're going to play and you're going to play well.

**Q. Is that something they could have accomplished in September, October --**

KEVIN O'CONNELL: I'm glad we didn't have to find out. That was kind of a first on a pretty standard concept with a little window dressing or sauce on it, to make things look the same, the likeness and through that process, Justin has an innate feel for open grass and to go find it and to be so decisive with it that the quarterback feels it as he climbs the pocket, and you need a guy that can make that throw on the move in the pocket. To place it where he did, what a moment.

**Q. Do you allow yourself to think if you go 2-0 --**

KEVIN O'CONNELL: We can't go 2-0 without going 1-0. (Laughter).

**Q. What about 1-0, 1-0?**

KEVIN O'CONNELL: We'll talk next week. We've got a heck of two challenges for sure and we have to have hundred percent focus on another playoff calibre team,



playing back at U.S. Bank, which will be huge, playing in front of our fans and we'll worry about what's from us then.

I know it's fun to laugh about but it is very critical and I think this team understands how we got to this point. It's a mature team that can be dangerous, I do believe, if we continue to just understand what got us to this moment from the first day we got to training camp through each and every one of our 15 opportunities so far, that's just what we are going to do.

**Q. Do you remember what you said to Sam after that play in the locker room?**

KEVIN O'CONNELL: I do. I do.

**Q. Did you share?**

KEVIN O'CONNELL: I cannot. I cannot.

**Q. Language or because it's personal?**

KEVIN O'CONNELL: More the personal subject matter. Those are such emotional moments. It's hard to replicate. I know some of our players have talked about the feeling of certain things this year when really good things happen but it's hard to replicate that because I want this so bad for these guys, and it's been awesome being a part of this journey with Sam, from many, many days and months ago in my office projecting nothing but confidence and belief in him, and he's not only earned much more than that. He continues to go out and do it in some really tough circumstances. Sam Darnold deserves so much of the credit for -- really all of the credit, I would say of what he's become, wearing number 14 in purple this year.

**Q. Is the grit tee talk -- did you get an explanation?**

KEVIN O'CONNELL: That's an interesting one. I'll defer to they say what they saw. We have got to be smart about the direction at which we gritty, I guess. (Laughter).

But no, I understand they are trying to get the taunting penalty out of the game, which you know, I'm all for, and I just -- when there's some other aspects of the game where people are pointing and directly pointing at some football coaches and sometimes those things don't ends up being seen, and that's the thing is these officials have to see in realtime those things. They have got a really hard job. I was very, very happy we got the face mask call. That gave us a chance to have an earned first down there on that last drive, and you know, credit to those officials for making that call and kind of continuing to let Sam play and keep us on track with a valid penalty.

**Q. You've been here before with other teams but the difficulty of winning in this building what does it say about the team's resourcefulness to handle the noise and rain and a team that's fighting for their fans?**

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Yeah, we had a lot of fans, I was pretty fired up to see the purple out there as well. Our fans always travel great. This building, the environment, it's built to be laud. The fans know that and they are. Momentum swings in the game, you can feel it in this building. But you're right, we have not had a lot of games, really just the game in London before it spit rain for most of the night. As a coach you're trying to prepare your team with things throughout the week, wet ball drill. We had six inches of snow on the ground and we are trying to simulate what this would be like in our indoor. The guys were ready to play. The energy in this building, I could feel it in our team in warmups and our guys were ready to go. I liked getting off to a fast start with that opening drive that. Can always help but you know that means absolutely nothing on the road. It's going to be a 60-minute slugfest for sure.

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