

# Seattle Seahawks Media Conference

Monday, December 23, 2024  
Seattle, Washington, USA

## Mike Macdonald

### Weekday Press Conference



MIKE MACDONALD: All right. Everybody ready? Short week and we're, you know, I guess it's the best gift you can get after a tough loss like that is an opportunity to move forward on a short week and get going, so altered the short week schedule a little bit. Felt like our guys needed like a full recovery day so we'll get after it, get a game plan together today and then kind of double down on our work today and travel Wednesday, so that's the plan.

#### Q. Do you have anymore updates on Ken Walker?

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, no updates right now on him, but getting a test done. We'll have a good idea on what it looks like over the next day or two.

#### Q. Coach, you were part of a great team last year in Baltimore, number one seed, and I'm curious, you know, you said yesterday this team's not quite where you were it to be or where the team wants to be.

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah.

#### Q. What's the differences between this team and a great team?

MIKE MACDONALD: Well, first, our guys know what it looks like and we've done those things at times throughout the year and just not as consistent as we want right now, but when we talk about December football, it's complementary. You know, we use terms like 12 is one, but that's really what it looks like and that's why we have those terms. That's why we've talked about those things throughout the entire year and that's what we're chasing, that vision of how we want to play, but it's a rugged, it's a physicality, it's a togetherness, great situational football that you can take advantage of those windows to win games like that, but that's what it looks like.

#### Q. What struck you the most when you went back and watched this morning?

MIKE MACDONALD: I don't know if I just evaluate the

heck out of games right after, but it is consistent with what we said after the game. We had our opportunities. We had our opportunities to win the game. You got to give the Vikings a lot of credit with their track record in tight games like that, being able to play well when it matters most and we fell short, so we got to move on. We got to go. Kind of the destiny's out of our hands right now and that stings but we got a lot to play for still and like we were talking about this morning with our staff, we're just -- we're just going to keep hammering away until this thing cracks and I think it's right there. So we want to be ready when that happens and hopefully we get an opportunity to get into the dance and go do some damage.

#### Q. Because you just said your destiny's not fully in your hands, a week ago you were able to come out of a loss saying we still control everything. It's all out in front of us. Is it at all a challenge with players this week to make sure they're all in the right space when that shifts a little bit?

MIKE MACDONALD: It doesn't change it. It really doesn't change your mentality, your approach. It won't change with our guys. Not worried about that one bit.

#### Q. When you talk about finding that consistency, do you think that comes as a result of more experience or more focus?

MIKE MACDONALD: I just think that we got to keep attacking it and hammering away at it. That's just -- I mean -- I don't know what else there is to do. Just keep attacking it. All the things. Having the discussions, having the conversations, chasing the things that we want to chase. That sounds like a lot of-- might be some coach speak crap. You might call me out on that, but I really feel the same way, I really feel that way. I feel like you got to be steadfast in what you're trying to achieve and chasing that vision and that's how we've always operated. That's how we'll always operate. Our guys know that. They'll be a -- we had a great recovery today. They're still working right now as we speak and we'll be ready to play on Thursday.

#### Q. What did you think of Geno Smith's overall day?

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, I said this morning I thought he played good enough to win the game. He did some really great things. You know, if we get a stop when we're



up four in the last... the end of the fourth quarter, we're having a different conversation right now. Everybody wants to talk about the interceptions and rightfully so, and we just -- those are things that we're working through, but I mean, one of the reasons that we're here with life, like I said last night, is I really felt that Geno's helped put us in this position. So, I thought he played a strong game.

**Q. You talked this morning about the sack that he took down at the 37 or the 43-yard line. On that sequence, he had those two big plays to Fant and McIntosh. How much consideration -- obviously you're playing to win the game, but how much consideration is going on the sidelines for trying to balance playing fast to get down field and score and also putting the Vikings in a position where they maybe have to start thinking about burning some time-outs.**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, those things are part of the conversation and how we intended to operate and we didn't get it done in that moment, so that's disappointing, obviously. We had a chance to tie out up with the ball moving forward and we'll be better next time, but it's -- that was definitely part of the conversation. We're operating with that under that pretense.

**Q. Mike, how important is selflessness and accountability in your program as you strive for perfection? And do you feel that you're getting that?**

MIKE MACDONALD: I mean, it's incredibly important. We talk about 12 is one, that's a team focus, a team mindset all through the lens of what's best for the team is going to be best and best for the individual, so we have to operate like that. We do operate like that. That's what -- this whole program is built around the team, so.

**Q. You talked about how important loving ball is for people on this team. You guys talk about it all the time, and curious if you've ever had players that you found that have learned to have that love at the NFL level or if they don't have it they're not going to get it.**

MIKE MACDONALD: You know, I used to think that once you don't have it or if you don't have it at some point that you probably don't have it, but my experience in the last couple of years changed my opinion on that. Probably not to a hundred percent but I do feel like the guys -- if you're able to go this far in your career and make it to this level, at some point in your career, there was a spark in your eye about how much you love the game and it's fun to get that out of guys, you know. That light come on more and that's one of the best parts about the job is to see that come to life and guys find that passion again, so I won't name any names but guys come to mind as I hear that question and

fires you up to hear about it, you know?

**Q. Is it safe to say there's maybe still guys you're learning about in your first year with this team about whether they have that love or still are trying to capture that?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, you're learning about your guys, learning new stuff every day. How could you not? How could you not?

**Q. What do you think has been the reason that the light came on with some of those guys?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Well, I just think if you empower them, like with talk about having big -- like a bigger vision for your guys than they can imagine for themselves and you make that come to life and you feel like you're empowering them and they have opportunities to succeed and have success, find joy in the process about how we operate, and the consistency in how we operate. They shouldn't be coming to work every day not knowing what the heck is about to happen and how we're going to treat them and I think if you stay steadfast in that and stay consistent, then that's when it comes on.

**Q. You mentioned Jarran Reed a couple times this year as playing really quell even when we don't see it in the numbers. The numbers were there yesterday. What's he been giving you and particularly what did he do well yesterday?**

MIKE MACDONALD: I think it's similar to Leo's curve for the middle of the season. We just knew he was playing really good football and it was great to see like Leo kind of break away, break up the stat category and I put Jarran in the same sentence of guys playing really good football. He's playing really hard. How they're working together in some of the pass rush stuff is pretty cool to see and it's exciting to see him get some production.

**Q. Their winning touchdown yesterday you say they made the play. It was a great play by them, but did that go as designed for you guys?**

MIKE MACDONALD: No. No. Definitely didn't want to give them a touchdown there (chuckling). I mean, yeah. We can execute what we're asking them to do better. We shouldn't be giving up 40-yard touchdown passes. That's not a good thing. But you do have to credit them, you know, by making a good play as well.

**Q. Aside from the two sacks that were given up in the quarter, the offensive line only gave up four quarterback hits the entire game with all the drop**

**backs that you guys had. What was your overall thoughts on the way they played given the aggressiveness that the Vikings bring with their blitzes.**

MIKE MACDONALD: Can you rephrase -- can you say that again?

**Q. Yeah. They only had four quarterback hits before you had a couple of those sacks at the end of the game. How did you feel about the way the offensive line handled dealing with that hyper aggressive defense that blitzes a lot and uses pressures?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, at the beginning of the game, the beginning of the -- I would say the first 75% of the game I thought we handled that stuff really well. I thought we had a good plan. Again, speaking of Geno. How he operates, getting in and out of the stuff we want to get based on the looks was efficient and at the end, you know, we gave up probably too many pressures in the end but the guys played hard. I thought they played sound, we just gave up some pressures at the end but the first three quarters of the game I thought were sound.

**Q. Reed not playing the first series, was that tied to something during the week that he did or did not do?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah.

**Q. But not the game? Not the Packers game?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Correct, yeah. It was during the week.

**Q. Sam Darnold has 30 touchdowns, 11 interceptions. Geno two years ago had 30 touchdowns, 11 interceptions. He's having a little bit of a different numbers year this year. What do you think the differences are in, like, players that can have a year like that and then a year statistically that's a little different. What do you think are contributing factors to that?**

MIKE MACDONALD: I mean you're asking me to compare apples to oranges. That's -- I don't know if it's -- if I were to give you any answer I would be speculating and making something up.

**Q. How much of -- the run pass numbers obviously looked kind of -- by the end of the game. How much of us that circumstance versus if you looked back at it we just need to run the ball more here in certain situations?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah. Like I said this morning, we just have to keep doing -- keep chasing, keep moving the ball forward. How far that manifests itself based off the game plan, we can do a better job of that and so that's stuff that we're thinking about doing, so some of the things that Minnesota was doing got us out of some runs earlier in the game and we made them pay and some of the early down pass stuff, so you just start looking at straight numbers of just more going on than just called runs and called passes but overall we got to do a better job of moving the ball forward.

**Q. Mike, you mentioned some of the procedural issues yesterday. I think you had seven penalties total, four false starts, illegal shift and such. What do you kind of see from that area of your team as you work through it at this stage of the season?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, we should be further along than we are right now on the procedure stuff, especially at home. We're working through that and like I said, this is an area that we need to attack, so we're spending a lot of time and energy getting it fixed and we need to do a better job. Our procedures actually have been better on the road it feels like at points than at home, so we'll look at it cadence-wise, operation-wise. Everything's only table.

**Q. Schedule-wise for you guys, is this like a normal Sunday to Thursday week or is anything different?**

MIKE MACDONALD: We did change the schedule partially because it's later in the week, partially because I felt like recovery was really important and then we could just kind of let's do the game plan all in one fell swoop on Tuesday morning and go from there and then obviously Christmas is going on as well and we're on the road, so. Normal week. Feels good. Feels good to have some adversity in a week. It's great. Good stuff.

**Q. This is probably a hard question to answer with any sort of exactness, but sort of ballpark, you've coached against DK. You obviously coach him now. Roughly how many other receivers around the league do you see commanding as much attention from defenses as DK?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Again, this is another apples to oranges. It's tough. DK has a unique skillset, different than a lot of other number ones, so I do think he's kind of unique in his own measure, so would be kind of hard to compare -- it's not like a true big Xs out there, maybe Mike Evans is similar. We haven't gone against Mike Evans in a while, but different styles, you know, like nowadays more number ones are more not true position-type guys. Justin Jefferson moves around, plays all the spots and

everything, but it's tough to compare.

**Q. Would you shed more light on what happened or didn't happen on the final pass?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, I'm just -- let's just -- we'll get that fixed in-house and we got to move forward, but in those chunk situations, I thought we had a good plan and we just didn't get it done.

**Q. If Kenneth Walker is unable to go this week, do you expect Zach Charbonnet to potentially be able to take the full load?**

MIKE MACDONALD: I'll speak with Zach. Seemed like, you know, he was limited during the game, but signs are positive with Zach right now.

**Q. You played against dual-threat quarterbacks several times this year, Kyler Murray twice. Caleb Williams absolutely thrives playing out of structure. Little different body type, not the same skillset exactly as Kyler Murray, but how much does that impact what you can do coverage-wise when you have a quarterback that has size and also has that ability to play sandlot football and thrives in those situations?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, that's a good question. I think you got to approach it with, again, broken record, all 11 mentality. So how you marry the rush with the coverage with how you're going to send from what angle, what pass rush lanes you want to fill up and how you account for all the different pass rush lanes is always important and it's not just six man dropback pass or five out, you got to account for it in the play action game as well, so. It's definitely at the top of your mind as you're going through a game plan for sure.

**Q. You said this morning it's kind of a chasing edge question but you said to be more efficient on first down. I know you're looking at how do you become more efficient on that?**

MIKE MACDONALD: It goes to Bob's question that's just I think that's more of a function of what we're trying to achieve right now. It's different for everybody, but it starts with what we're good at and building around our players, so, that's really the starting point.

**Q. And how much does the opponent take factor into that in terms of --**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, every time we're going to game plan, it's going to be through our wheelhouse and attacking their structures and how they operate but we

shouldn't be -- we want to keep it within our sweet spot of what we can execute and do at a high level and it will be through the lens of how they operate as well.

**Q. Do you feel like you're dictating terms right now on offense?**

MIKE MACDONALD: At times like when we -- like I said, it's our football team right now. We do a lot of great things. A lot of times I feel like we do and sometimes we're not, but you can ask me about special teams, defense, it'll be the same answer.

**Q. How does Christmas factor in? I know there's not much time now, yacht go got to run to Chicago.**

MIKE MACDONALD: It's definitely -- look. At the end of the day, football doesn't rank first on the hierarchy of needs here so it's really important for our players and our coaches to be able to be home with their families so we'll start later on Thursday, come in around 11:00. Hopefully... it's not ideal, but it should be enough time for them to spend time with their families and they can get out of here tomorrow night.

MODERATOR: Anything else? Thank you.

MIKE MACDONALD: All right. Thank you.