

Seattle Seahawks Media Conference

Thursday, March 13, 2025

Seattle, Washington, USA

Mike Macdonald

Sam Darnold

Klint Kubiak

Weekday Press Conference



MIKE MACDONALD: Appreciate everybody coming in and spending the time with us.

But really excited to introduce Sam Darnold as new quarterback, and this is exciting times, man.

You know, it's been a whirlwind couple weeks here as you guys well documented, but as this thing started to come together, feels similar like the way I felt introducing Klint was just looking into Sam; and obviously gone against him in my career and here last year at Lumen against the Vikings.

First of all, he's just a tremendous human being. A great leader. We have a lot of people in our building that have a history with Sam that have a lot of respect for him as a person, as a leader, as a football player.

I'm really excited to get our relationship started and getting to introduce himself to the rest of the team and the city and the 12s. I think we are going to be really proud of our quarterback here.

Then, obviously, as a football player and a quarterback, just a heck of a player. Just tough as nails from my opinion. You go through all the talent, we can talk about that until we are blue in the face. But just really excited about what Sam is going to bring to our football team and just an exciting time.

Yeah, without any further adieu, introduce Sam Darnold as our new quarterback.

SAM DARNOLD: Appreciate that, guys, appreciate that, Coach. First and foremost, I'm excited to be here. Excited to get to know this organization. I've already met, I think, most of the people, not most of the people but some of the people I'll be dealing with on a day-to-day basis. Excited to

meet my teammates. I've met a couple of the new ones already. You know, D-Law, Josh, just very, very excited to get to meet everyone.

And just about this organization. I've heard so many good things about this organization from different guys that have played here, retired, and still playing in the league. You hear nothing but great things about this organization, and man, I'm just so excited to be a part of it. Excited to meet some of the fans, the 12s.

You know, playing here, I think I've played here a total of three times, actually played twice. I was a backup in San Francisco working with Klint here, one of those times, and it's an unbelievable atmosphere at Lumen Field.

I'm so excited to finally have those 12s on my side this time. And yeah, man, just really looking forward to this opportunity to be here with my teammates, with these coaches.

I think we have an opportunity to do something very, very special here. But it's going to take a lot of hard work, and we know that. I know that going in. And yeah, just very excited to take this one day at a time and that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to put my head down and go to work, and just excited to do that.

Q. Sam, can you take us through the process for you of, I guess, when you learned you weren't going to stay with the Vikings and how the Seahawks got into it?

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, obviously heard the Geno news. When that broke, I understood that this could potentially be a spot for me.

Then, what was it, Monday, just kind of letting my agents and these guys kind of figure out what would be a really good fit for me, and that kind of came to fruition a little bit.

And then finally on Wednesday, finally getting to talk to some of these coaches and even have some of the players each out to me, guys that I played with at USC, having Jackson reach out, as well. Just so eager; I met Jackson at the Pro Bowl and just so eager to get to know each other.

And you know, get working. Talking about when we are

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going to throw with each other and stuff like that. Just very excited about this opportunity and go to work, go to work with these guys in the building every single day.

Q. You worked with Sam in 2023. You saw what he did last year. What about his game fits what you want to do on offense?

KLINT KUBIAK: Sam's extremely talented. Obviously a great thrower of the football. His mobility sticks out, his toughness, his maturity.

The thing about Sam that really sticks out is just he's an A-plus teammate. Elevates those around him. The guys he plays with respect him because when your best place are your hardest workers, that's what you really strive for, and that's what you want as a coach, and Sam has that in spades.

Q. Why is this scheme good for you?

SAM DARNOLD: Obviously working with Klint a little bit in San Francisco, very familiar with the scheme. Ran some very, very similar concepts last year in Minnesota, as well.

Yeah, just even get to go talk to Klint a little bit, you know, on Wednesday, just being very, very excited just about this opportunity.

And just to be able to collaborate, I think is the biggest thing. There's variations of the same system that kind of go around the NFL and being in one of those last year and kind of getting to morph a little bit of that with obviously most of the stuff that we did in San Francisco, and then I know he grew on his system a little bit last year in New Orleans.

Again, just very -- I know I keep using this word but very excited to just get rolling on kind of what this system, what the offense is going to look like next year.

Q. Is there something particularly about the system that fits your skills?

SAM DARNOLD: First and foremost, I think maybe Klint could talk a little bit more about that in detail.

But I know foundation is the run game, and we're going to run the rock. I know Klint is big on running the rock, and you've got to do that, and building that off of playaction keepers and dropping back when you have to.

Q. How much was the system an attraction to signing with Seattle?

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, it was definitely one of the things that I factored into signing here, and again, just being able to work with Klint, and having talk with Klint a ton in San Francisco about kind of what we liked, disliked.

We have so much in common when it comes to football, and yeah, just very, very pumped to get this thing going.

Q. Why do you think things clicked for you in Minnesota the way they did last year?

SAM DARNOLD: I think for me, I think the biggest thing was just consistent, playing consistent football. And then it's a lot easier said than done but not turning the football over.

I think that's the biggest thing is kind of understanding when a play is dead, especially on first and second down, and then third down, like you're going to have some plays where the D-Line might get a good rush and they might get in there; and you might get a sack and keep two hands on the ball, and let Dickson, our punter, do his thing back there, that's one.

MIKE MACDONALD: Nice.

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, just very -- being very smart. Situationally aware, I think mis the biggest thing that kind of, you know, turned my game into being kind of here and there, hit and miss to playing consistent football. Situational awareness and understanding within the scheme kind of where my outlets were.

Q. You had more explosive passes than any quarterback in the NFL last year. What about your game allows you to excel with those deeper passes?

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, it doesn't happen by mistake. I work on that a ton and I've worked on that the last few years in the off-season, whether it's mechanics or mentally, understanding leverages of safeties, how are we going to attack this guy, how are we going to attack the post safety this week. When they do play split safety, is it Cover 2 quarters? There's so many variation of two-high that you can play.

It's just understanding who we are playing, where the weaknesses are in that defense and how we can take advantage over the top.

And then again, like the biggest thing is if it's not there, understanding where my outlets are?

Q. You game planned for Sam last year, and you coached against him. Now that he's on your side, what



excites you about his game?

MIKE MACDONALD: Well, I think Sam's best days are ahead of him, and I think you've seen that through the course of his career. How he's able to grow as a player. I'm sure talking with some are defensive guys, like we felt him out there. When you play quarterbacks, or a quarterback's on your team, you want to feel them in the game. And you definitely feel Sam's presence and poise, competitiveness, accuracy, like the downfield threat, that's definitely a part of it.

And then being able to run the show, too, operationally; Sam can do it with the best of them as well.

Q. The flipside of Bob's question, getting to the point you guys where you made the decision you did with Geno, and targeting Sam as where you were going to go next, can you walk us through that process and how you got to this point?

MIKE MACDONALD: It was an interesting series of events for sure. When it became apparent that we were going to have to pivot away from Geno, then you know, definitely hoping that it was going to land with Sam. There was some time there. Everyone involved in the process was awesome. John was awesome. Joey was awesome. All of our pro personnel people were on it. Just really fortunate that it worked out the way it did.

And there's some great quarterbacks out there that we looked into but really apparent that Sam was our guy.

Q. What were the dynamics to make that choice?

MIKE MACDONALD: I would say like once we decided to make the move with Geno, understanding who was out there, definitely Sam became the No. 1 focus pretty quickly.

Q. Your success in not turning the ball over, 35 touchdown passes, over 4,300 passing yards, leaps and bounds better than previous years. Do you feel you found something in your game going into the year, or was it film or coaches that unlocked something?

SAM DARNOLD: I think you learn from experience, good or bad. I turned a ton being in New York. Learned a ton being in Carolina. Learned a ton obviously going to San Francisco, and Clint was a huge part of that.

Just kind of understanding, okay, like -- and I really thank Brock a ton, Brock Purdy, for just his style of play and how he described his style as like, we've got a ton of great play-makers on offense.

Like my job is just to play point guard and get the ball in their hands and let them go do great things with the rock.

When I changed my thought process as a quarterback to kind of just getting the ball in my guys' hands, that's really kind of where it unlocked for me a little bit.

And then obviously the coaching I got in Minnesota, you know, it was an incredible experience. KO, Josh West, Grant, all those guys; I can go on and on, and obviously the players we had in Minnesota as well.

It's a credit to everything, man. I can't necessarily point to one thing, but my entire journey has been about growing as a person and as a player, and that's kind of where -- and I'm just so, so thankful that it's led me to this point here in Seattle.

Q. After the season ended, where was your head at in terms of possibly returning to Minnesota or testing free agency?

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, we were looking at all possibilities to be honest. I'm just very happy that all roads kind of led to Seattle.

Q. You guys have made some big moves, and I know you're not done, but the offense right now, what's your vision for that going forward and with the changes you've made without having DK and Tyler?

MIKE MACDONALD: I think the vision for offense has stayed the same. Those are big shoes to fill, and you can't do it by just like one person.

But I think like the synergy involved that is going to be needed in order to do it is exciting as we start to build this. The guys are in the building. The possibilities of people that we can either acquire in the draft or throughout the whole process. The vision we maintain is the same.

Just like Sam is talking about, his mentality of his growth mindset of trying to build our football team and take it to the next level, that's there, man. Like we're just -- this is great. I'm happy everybody is here. Can't wait until we actually start doing some real football.

Q. 11 months ago when you were in Minnesota and they draft McCarthy, and if someone had told you you would through 4,300 yards and have 35 touchdowns and now have a contract with Seattle, what would you have said then, 11 months ago?

SAM DARNOLD: It's tough, man, like whenever you get



into hypotheticals, that's always kind of a world I try to stray away from a little bit, or stay away from.

I knew the possibilities of going there, and you know, that's one of the reasons I signed there was the potential to have success, and not just have success, but again, like this whole journey has been about for me, it's been about learning and growing. I knew I was going to have a chance to do that there, and was able to just play, like I keep mentioning, I was able to play consistent football on a weekly basis.

You know, just happy to be able to do that here now.

Q. You mentioned learning from experiences. What did you learn from the end of last season and what can you grow from, having that success, reaching that hurdle and not getting over that?

SAM DARNOLD: I was waiting for someone to bring that up, by the way. I appreciate that.

It's fair. You get all the way to that point, and you have the season that we had offensively as a team, and then you know, you run into at the end of the day only one team can win the Super Bowl.

Unfortunately we weren't that team. But I learned a ton from those last two games, especially, playing Detroit and playing L.A. We are going to see L.A. twice a year, obviously, playing in this division and really looking forward to that.

It's just, you know, continuing to learn. Learning things about yourself, what they did schematically, and yeah, that's basically all you can do is just learn from those experiences.

Q. How important is the leadership you're going to be looking for from Sam in this offense?

KLINT KUBIAK: It's very important in Sam, he's going to lead through his production, all the players are. They have got a job to do and they have got to go play the game. I want his natural personality to come out, and that's why he's here is he has that natural ability to lead.

Most importantly, he's a great player and he's going to go lead with his production and we are going to help him as a staff and as a team.

It's not all about Sam. It's the guys he's throwing to and the guys blocking for him, tight ends, running backs, it's all a team thing. Glad that he's leading the charge but we are going to have success when the team has success.

Q. You've coached quarterbacks a long time. That position, in particular, are people too quick to write a guy off when they have got just everything that goes into that and then we see someone like Sam do what he did last year?

KLINT KUBIAK: I agree with that. There's 32 jobs, right, and then maybe you get selected early, you get a couple -- you get a year or two maybe to prove yourself and then they kick you to the curb. And some guys are mentally tough enough to come back and fight through it and I'm sitting next to one of them.

You go back to his 2022 season where he didn't play till the end of the year, the last six games, he goes 4-2 in Carolina and comes to San Francisco and sits behind Brock and keeps growing as a player; and then goes and does what he does in Minnesota.

It's really impressive to be that kind of a fighter and to stay in the fight and when you get your chance again, be ready, and Sam was ready, and Sam earned this job here.

Q. Can you talk about the value of situational awareness in a quarterback? I know Sam talked about it. But as an offensive coordinator, how important is that?

KLINT KUBIAK: Well, it's critical, right, and Sam touched on it. That comes with experience, and Sam has had a lot of experience and was really well-coached in Minnesota. You can only remind a quarterback so much before that button goes off you and can't talk to him anymore.

So they have got to have it ingrained in them. Those are the things you talk about in the meeting room but to have a guy that can go execute that on game day with 70,000 people screaming at him, it's not easy to find. We have got the right guy here.

Q. Mike said he thinks your best days are still ahead of you. Where is somewhere you want to make a step forward, beyond what you did last year?

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, I think I kind of look at those last couple games. I think being able to get the ball out a little bit quicker on some of the drop-back stuff that we had those last couple games, and understanding where the outlets are. And even if a guy is covered, like even if my back is covered on a check-down, just throwing it at his feet. I felt like I was taking some unnecessary sacks last year, especially those last few games.

And just going to continue to work that however I can in



drills in drill settings in early April, and even, you know, later this March.

But when we start to get into those team periods and start to get into training camp a little bit, I'll definitely be thinking about that, keeping two hands on the ball in the pocket at all times, and just doing all the little fundamental things. And I think that that's a big one, is being able to just get the ball out on time.

Q. When you do something as seismic as trade your quarterback, trade someone as productive and as established as DK, and cut someone like Tyler, it can create the perception that you guys are rebuilding.

MIKE MACDONALD: All those things happened?

Q. It can create the idea you that I guess are rebuilding. How would you explain why that's not the case?

MIKE MACDONALD: I don't think that really showed up in our mindset throughout the whole process. I think you're always look -- all these moves, as serious as they seem to be, and they were, it's all through the lens of what's best for the team now and in the long run.

So it just seemed that they all happened sequentially back-to-back-to-back, which was necessary at the time. But we're rocking, man, we're rolling. I think we're really excited about our future, and I mean, these are like kind of the dull days of March with your team. It's a dead period and all that.

We're building right now behind the scenes, so when the guys show up, we hit the ground running a hundred miles an hour in April.

Q. The defense, Jarran and Ernest resigned, and DeMarcus Lawrence; how do you feel about those moves and what you picked up?

MIKE MACDONALD: I feel tremendous about those moves. I mean, we got to meet those guys today, or got to meet D-Law today.

And man, just again, just getting those guys back, J-Reed, such a great leader on our team.

We all saw what happened to our defense when Ernest walked in the door. There's no secret about it. That guy is a force multiplier.

You've seen the tape with DeMarcus. He's a dynamite player. We obviously had a relationship with him in AD,

being from Dallas. So a lot of respect for him.

I know Klint has had to game plan against him which is probably not a great experience. I think we're building something cool on defense.

Q. Where are you on the offensive line and at wide receiver from where you want to be right now?

MIKE MACDONALD: Will we ever be where we want to be? Probably not. You know, As a football team, we've never going to sit up here and be like, hey, we're satisfied. You know, that's not going to be our mentality.

But it's an ongoing process about where we're at. Turns out, I don't think we have to play for another five months or so.

So there's plenty of time to develop the guys we have in house and there's going to be opportunities to add guys when necessary that fit us, and are the right moves in those times.

That's where we're at.

Q. I know you like to score, but which would you prefer: A long, six-minute drive or a quick strike?

SAM DARNOLD: Say that one more time.

Q. Which is your preference: A six-minute drive or a quick strike, with all things being equal?

SAM DARNOLD: I feel like -- I don't know. Scoring a touchdown is -- I mean, you'll take it however it comes, whether it's a long, you know, like you mentioned, like if it's a six-minute drive, 15-, 16-play drive, those are great. I know the big boys up front might not appreciate that answer but that's always a fun one coming off to the sideline, some of those guys getting oxygen.

But those are always fun drives for me because you're handing the ball off and you're just methodically moving the ball down the field and maybe converting a few first downs.

But then sometimes you have the 98-yards touchdowns that happen, and those are always fun, too, when you get to run down the field with your boys and celebrate as you're running down the field, hearing the echo in your helmet. There's nothing like it, man.

There's nothing like scoring a touchdown, whether it's me throwing it or whether it's someone -- whether it's a running back, fullback, whoever, running the ball in.

There's nothing like hearing that noise, especially in a place like Lumen, to be able to hear that after a score. There's nothing like it in the world.

Q. Sam was one of the best play-action passers in the game last year. Talk about how important that is for your offense.

KLINT KUBIAK: Definitely stand out on tape, seeing Sam turn his back to the defense and find deep crossers and hit guys in stride, is definitely a strength of his game, one of many strengths. Throwing on the run.

But to be an elite quarterback, you have to be at your best on third down and in the red zone, and I think that, too, where Sam really makes his stride. That's the part we are most excited about.

Q. What do you remember specifically about the win in Seattle last December, and how satisfying was it?

MIKE MACDONALD: I appreciate that question.

(Laughter).

SAM DARNOLD: I'm excited to talk about this.

How long have we got? Have we got an hour?

No, it's incredible, man. Whenever you can come to an atmosphere like this and everyone kind of goes quiet, you know, I'm not -- hopefully that doesn't happen here anymore.

But no, man, it was a special, special game. I felt like we, as an offense, we weren't clicking the way that we wanted to.

And that's a huge credit to Coach and their entire staff for putting together a really good plan for us. We're able to stay in the game just long enough to make that comeback at the end and have that touchdown.

Yeah, you know, our defense, I feel like, was able to kind of put it away there with the late turnover. That's pretty much all I remember.

I remember that touchdown, the one to Jets down the sideline. That was one that will be in my memory bank for as long as I live. But yeah, that was -- no offense, Coach, I keep ramming before about this. I asked you how long I had because I'll keep going.

No, it was just a special, special moment to be able to win that football game.

Q. Same question for you. Apologize. Can you evaluate his performance in the fourth quarter of that game? And is there any extra weight that you put into what you see in your own eyes in evaluating when you bring a guy in or what you see on film?

MIKE MACDONALD: First part of the question, we talked about it. But definitely felt Sam throughout the game. You are calling a game plan against the quarterback, the personnel, your people, the person calling the plays on their team.

So it was a heck of a battle. It was a knock-down drag out fight to the end, and to Sam's credit, they kept -- just like kept battling and found a way to win in the end.

A lot of respect for, obviously, what he did in the game.

But the second part of the question was, I think, absolutely. To see it in person, see him perform and scout team him throughout the week. You know, you're watching a lot of tape of pretty much every snap throughout the season.

Probably wouldn't have had that exposure going into the whole thing if we had not have played Sam.

Q. The revelation that you had in San Francisco about being the point guard, do you feel like earlier in your career you put more pressure on yourself to be more than that, being the third overall pick?

SAM DARNOLD: It wasn't necessarily being the third overall pick.

I think even going back to college, I felt like if something wasn't there, like if a concept wasn't there, I was sort of eager to run, get out of the pocket. I had been doing that since high school, as well. It always easier for me. I felt like I could do that at-east; and you get to this level, and it's not that easy.

You know, I think that's where kind of the troubles came a little bit early in my career was just thinking I could run around and make plays if something wasn't there.

But yeah, I think that's just kind of where that stemmed from a little bit.

Q. Certainly we talked about these moves over the last week for this team. What does it mean for this city and its fans that you can help lead this new chapter of Seahawks football moving forward?

SAM DARNOLD: Again, I'm not necessarily -- I can't think



about the big picture like that. I'm really -- it's -- I think it's a lot easier for me to think about it as okay what do I have to do next, and what am I doing right now.

Like me and Klint were talking about certain plays, and you know, kind of getting the playbook, and starting with formations.

That's kind of where my mind is at right now is, I'm not too worried about the big picture of things. All of that will kind of take care of itself if I just do my job and help this team the best I can win football games.

Q. How much of what you're teaching him right now, or about to teach him, is the same he learned in San Francisco two years ago?

KLINT KUBIAK: I think we'll keep some common things. Those are some conversations Sam and I will have going forward.

Like Sam said earlier, throughout the league, we are running a lot of similar things, right. It's just about how we deploy our five eligibles and getting Sam on the same page with his receivers and tight ends and running backs, and we're going to do what Sam does best and what his teammates do best regardless of what may have been done in the past.

It's just important that we have a heck of an off-season from middle of April through June and get to know each other really well and get our offense going and be on the same page.

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