

# Seattle Seahawks Media Conference

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## Cooper Kupp

Weekday Press Conference



**Q. What does it mean? We've heard a little bit, but to come back around at this point in your career and to be with your hometown team, what does that mean to you?**

COOPER KUPP: No, it's a really cool thing. Obviously growing up in Yakima, watching the Seattle Seahawks growing up, I've talked a lot about the memories and experiences. That's kind of what football is. It's remembering all those big moments. Walking through the halls back here, looking at these photos of iconic -- just moments in games and being able to recognize, man, I remember where I was when that happened, when that moment happened.

Growing up watching Seattle, watching football being a huge part of my life and then playing at Eastern Washington, full circle moment coming back and being able to throw on a Seattle Seahawks uniform, it's a really cool thing. It's something I don't take lightly.

Just really excited to be able to be a part of this program and what this program has been about and continue it moving forward.

**Q. Did the Seahawks and watching the Seahawks shape anything about your game and the way you approach football?**

COOPER KUPP: Well, I mean, certainly there's players that you watched and you learned from. I think that's been my thing is being able to see what guys do and say, hey, is that something that I can do, is this something that I want to implement in my game. We were just talking down the hall, Doug Baldwin, one of the best counterbalance releases in history. It's like little pieces of a game like that, that's like, man, that's something that I do, it's watching Doug Baldwin do that stuff to guys, turn people around all the time. So that's part of what -- it's in my bag. It's something that I carry with me.

So it is, there's guys that have come through this

organization that have been impactful in ways they might not know about how I play the game.

**Q. You've proven people wrong throughout your career, and there's some people saying, yeah, he may be injured, he's too old. Are you taking that as a challenge to prove people wrong again?**

COOPER KUPP: Yeah, like you said, I've had people doubt me for a long time through my life. In some ways rightfully so. I was a very small kid growing up and cared a lot, but there's a lot of people that care a lot and just don't have the stuff to string together. I was very blessed to have a lot of coaching to come alongside me and teach me and show me the way. I'm very thankful for that. I wouldn't be here today without that.

But with all those doubts and all those things, it's never been about proving other people wrong. I think I've lived in that space, and it never goes well.

It's been about being who I am, like believing in myself and knowing that I can be who I see myself becoming. When I've taken that attitude, when I've taken that mindset, that's always when I've been at my best, and I'll continue that.

I know how to navigate these waters. I've been here before, and it's not about the negative energy. It's not about proving anyone else wrong, trying to make anyone else feel bad about anything. It's just about being myself and being who I believe I can be and going out there and playing the game I love.

**Q. What have these last couple months been like for you, finding out that you were going to be back with the Rams and then becoming a free agent and going through that process?**

COOPER KUPP: It's been difficult. In all honesty, it's been very difficult and frustrating and there's been lots of questions and things that are -- it's a real tough situation. I've said, I've always imagined that I'd finish my career there, but that's not what the plan was that God had for me and my family. Stepping into this new adventure, this new place, this new chapter in my career but also in our lives as my wife and I navigate moving back up home, back up to our home state, I think that's something that we're excited about facing.

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We're excited about the community that we get to be a part of, the people that are going to be a part of our lives. But yeah, it has been difficult. Without a doubt, it has been difficult, and we're humans, we're real people, and some of that's been -- in a lot of ways, I'm thankful to have had a wife to lean on and to count on to be able to walk through this with because it would be very hard to do by myself, and our boys have been incredible through it all.

But yeah, we are very excited about what the future holds here in Seattle.

**Q. Did the Rams give you a why? Was it the injuries or what did they cite?**

COOPER KUPP: Yeah, I mean, I'm sure they have their reasons for why they want to do things, whatever it is. Not a ton of clarity in that regard. But at the end of the day, I'm thankful to be able to walk away from that organization and be able to look back on all those memories, all those experiences, all those things that we were able to go through together and the relationships that we had with so many people there and look at it in a positive light and be very thankful for my time in Los Angeles.

Some of that we'll always cherish. But like I said, we are very excited about the chapter ahead and what we can do here in Seattle.

**Q. Once you found out that you were going to be able to pick where you were going next, how quickly did the Seahawks come on to your radar and the process of getting to the point where you decided this was where you were going to come?**

COOPER KUPP: Yeah, it was pretty quick in terms of expressing the interest once I was released. I thought that as we went through things, I thought that the messaging from Mike and from John, from Kubes, all the guys I talked to here, the messaging was right on par with what I thought was how you build a championship team. It's about the people. You focus on bringing good people that are about ball, and all the other stuff is going to fall in place.

That's something that when that was the mindset, when it wasn't about specific football -- like people, football people that you try and get in place, we're trying to get just the people. We're trying to get solid people that know how to work, that are about playing this game the right way. That's something that I was like, man, this is something that I know that that's how you build a good team. I know the best teams I've been a part of have been built that way. So that excited me.

As time went on, talking to Ernest Jones who's been here who I've known, talking to Jackson, talking with Sam after he had signed on and various guys in the organization, just like, hey, there's the messaging every time; it's like, hey, we're building something here that's special and we've got the right people in the building to do it. It just built up, and now I'm really excited to be a part of it.

**Q. What are your thoughts about being part of a revamped offense with a new quarterback this year, also?**

COOPER KUPP: Yeah, initially I was really -- I felt like I was behind the 8-ball a little bit. I was like, man, I'm going to be behind everyone trying to figure this stuff out, and actually not until a couple days ago did I realize that day one OTAs everyone is learning this offense. So that's going to be fun. That's going to be something that I'm excited about.

In terms of especially with Sam coming in here, we get to learn this offense together. We get to, as it grows, every offense you have, the starting point of how you want to do things, what that's going to look like, and as the players come in and bring it to life, it grows, it changes, it morphs into accentuating the guys' abilities, the guys that you have.

I'm excited to be able to go through that. It's just such a fun process, being able to build that. It's something that gets me very excited about this offense, about this team.

**Q. How familiar were you with Sam before all this, and did that play a part in you wanting to be a part of his offense?**

COOPER KUPP: Yeah, so I had watched him quite a bit when he was the USC competing there. Watched him early in his career, and I thought, man, in terms of thrower of the football, he makes some incredible throws. Went through some things -- he's been through some difficult circumstances, but his confidence, his ability to, like, maneuver those things and be able to come back and have the year that he did last year when in this league it's a hard thing to do. But that confidence, like I touched on before, it's not about what other people think about you, it's who you believe that you are, and him being able to come out and compete like he did last year, I think that speaks a lot to the person.

I'm really excited about obviously a great football player and just seeing how he works, how he goes about his business, and I've heard all the great things, and excited to build this thing with him.

**Q. You've predominantly played in the slot in your career and so has Jaxon Smith-Njigba. How do you foresee that playing out, and is that something you've talked about with coaches?**

COOPER KUPP: Yeah, it'll be interesting to see. Like I said, as the offense kind of gets going and we start building this thing out, like I said, I trust this offensive staff and being able to emphasize the things that guys do well. In eight years with the Rams, I think it's tagged with the slot, but I don't know how you determine that when we're in condensed formations, I'm outside but I'm running a slot route. A lot of times I was outside, and I'm not sure if it was being tagged as a slot route or not.

But the ability to move in an offense and the ability in this offense and what Kubiak has done is being able to formation guys to be anywhere. That's how I had learned this offense originally was that you've got to learn the whole thing because you could be in any one of these spots at any time. You might think of yourself as -- you can't think of yourself as just a slot, you have to see yourself as playing any one of these positions at any time because you could be asked to run any one of these routes.

I think Jaxon did some of that same stuff last year where he played inside and outside and being able to run routes that are typically for an X or an F or a Z, being able to run all that stuff. I think that's what we've got. We've got guys that are going to be willing to learn the offense as a whole there and be able to take advantage of those opportunities.

**Q. How did you convince Uchenna to give up No. 10?**

COOPER KUPP: So we ended up, he's got a foundation that's doing some really good stuff here in the community, and it was important for him to -- that that be part of this change. He was great to work with, and able to donate to his foundation and make sure that he felt good about that.

He mentioned he's played his best football in No. 10, and it had been important to him, and just his time in Seattle and just clearly the community was an important part of this whole thing. So I respect his desires there, and able to work it out, and really thankful for him being able to work something out for us.

**Q. I know you grew up on the other side of the state, but did you make it to any Seahawks games growing up?**

COOPER KUPP: I did. I made it to a few. I remember my first one was, I believe, a Sunday night game. Was it Sunday night? We talked about this a second ago. I think

it was Sunday night. Snow game against the Packers, 2006. Anyone? There you go. So I was there, too. I was up in the very top frozen as an icicle up there. But it was incredible watching Alexander went off. It was a crazy -- I feel like I got to miss school the next day, so it was like bonus points because I didn't have to go to school the next day.

But yeah, memories. I have memories of being there, being part of that environment, and it's such a cool thing. That was a special thing growing up, to be able to go to a Seahawks game, and yeah, very special memory.

**Q. Did you say you went to another one?**

COOPER KUPP: I went to another one when I was in college. We watched Baltimore come to town, and I was able to be right next to the tunnel as Ray Lewis ran out and my dad tapped me and was like, hey, do you think you can play in the NFL? I looked at Ray Lewis, and I was like, oh, yeah, I can play. I got this. (Laughter.)

**Q. Not every receiver takes blocking as a big part of their role, but it seems like that's something you take pride in. Talk about how that's evolved as part of your game?**

COOPER KUPP: Yeah, early on, I've got to credit Jay Dumas, my high school coach. Shout-out to Jay for making that a point of emphasis for me. I didn't learn until later that he was the worst blocking receiver at WSU in history of WSU receivers. He seemed to make it seem like it was really important that you blocked as a wide receiver. So when I was in high school, that was always a big emphasis, and it carried on as we went through college and then for the Rams that's always been -- with me in condensed formations, you're a part of the blocking surface. You're a part of the counts.

That was so much fun because I got to learn as if I was an extension of the offensive line the verbiage, the thought process about how they're doing things, the angles that are being done, the counts with the linebackers, with the shades, with where the bubble is at and all this different stuff. I was like, man, I love football and this is a whole 'nother part of it. I thought I had things figured out, but you realize there's a whole 'nother world happening right at the line of scrimmage.

It's been fun for me to learn and be a part of. As that's grown, I've just fallen in love with it, fallen in love with being a part of helping the run game become a thing, come to life, and seeing how that plays off into the pass game and all the things you can do there. It's been a fun thing for me.



**Q. There was a report Dak Prescott called you to try to get you to go to Dallas. Was it fun being recruited during any of this?**

COOPER KUPP: Yeah, it was cool. It's one of those things where I've been in contact with a lot of these guys just as your career goes on. You run into people and just hear what's going on at these different organizations and what they're thinking and how they're seeing things and what they envision football looking like. It was cool kind of reconnecting with a lot of people that you might get a few words with after a game or you might talk to once or twice. But it's just good. There's just a lot of really good people, a lot of good football players in this league, and it was fun kind of connecting with them.

**Q. The rapport that you had with Stafford and knowing where to go and where the ball would be, how long did that take to develop?**

COOPER KUPP: It was very fast. It was very fast. Honestly, it was very fast, and I think part of that, one was Matthew played when he was in Detroit, I think he had like five offensive coordinators in his time there. So he had seen all this different -- all these different ways of running an offense.

Then coming in to OTAs it was just kind of like a -- I don't know, it just clicked. It just clicked.

I think a big part of that, though, is being able to just -- my dad played quarterback, and so I learned receiver from a quarterback. I was running routes for my dad and he'd tell me from his perspective if I did something wrong. It might not be what the receiver coach would say, but the quarterback was telling me what I did wrong.

I think that's helped set things up to where I feel like I can understand what a quarterback is seeing and how he's feeling based on the coverage and where the openings might be, and I think I play a role in that and trying to make sure that I can be able to find those soft spots for him. I'm looking forward to Sam. He's going to be in a similar spot where he's played in a lot of different offenses now, and in some ways while he doesn't probably feel like that was the best thing for him, when he gets into the right system, which is real similar to what he did last year, that can be a very big positive for a quarterback.

**Q. I spoke with Coach Dumas earlier and he told me a story about you coming to him in the weight room, and he said that you asked him the stats of going to college and then going to the NFL. He told you the stats but that didn't really faze you. You said, if that's what I've got to do, I'm going to do it. How do you**

**carry that mindset with you still today?**

COOPER KUPP: I remember that conversation because I said I want to be a running back at USC. I told him, I want to play running back at USC. Reggie Bush was my guy. He said, you've got to change your plans. He's like, best case scenario, maybe you can go to Central Washington, play at a D-II school there. If you work really hard, maybe you can do that. I was like, you know what, no, I think I'm going to do what I want to do.

In some ways it kind of goes back to that doubting piece. It's like, well, that's what he thinks but I know what I want to do, I know what I want to achieve and to become and who I am. While I didn't get to go to USC and be a running back, I do think the habits that I formed in high school have carried me through every step of my career, understanding that it is the work, it's the time you put in, it's your preparation that sets you up to go play this game freely.

Those habits were established early on. It's just all I know now. I'm thankful for Dumas, for his doubts. I'm thankful for Dumas also for his coaching because he is one of the guy that as time went on believed in me and pushed me and has set me up to be who I am today.

**Q. When did the dream of being a running back die?**

COOPER KUPP: Die? Oh, probably the next year when I got moved to receiver and realized -- I got put up on varsity my sophomore year. Had no business being up there. No business being up on varsity. My pants were tucked into my mid-back. I was not ready for it.

But I realized then, the path to becoming a USC running back was a long one, and I didn't point my legs just aren't going to be -- I don't have the legs for it. I don't have the legs for it. I can see myself in this jersey. I look like a giraffe out there. It's just not going to work. But the adjustment to be like, man, I fell in love with receiver at that point. I fell in love with it. Coach Dumas was a receiver. I adored Coach Dumas, and I was like, I can make this work.

**Q. Bobby Wagner went closer to home and got to play the Seahawks a couple times a year, looked forward to that. You come closer to home, you're going to play the Rams a couple times. Are you looking forward to facing your former team?**

COOPER KUPP: Yeah, I am looking forward to it. That didn't play into the decision to come here, but it's a nice little thing on the side to be able to go against those guys and know a lot of those guys, so much respect for the coaching staff, the way they handle things down there, the

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players down there. I am excited about it, though. It's going to be a really cool thing.

When that time comes, it will just be football at that point. But I am looking forward to it.

**Q. What are some of the things Ernest and Jaxon talked about in terms of what they're building here?**

COOPER KUPP: Yeah, it all went back to the people. Ernest talked a lot about just how when he came in here, just the way he was welcomed in and the way the guys went to work, the communication they had, the way that they operated as one on defense, and that's a huge thing defensively. Like defenses only work if you're playing as one unit. He just had incredible things to say about his time here last year with the guys.

Then Jaxon, he said a lot of the same stuff. He just loved the coaching staff. He loved the way the guys were treated, the way the organization was run, and he said, he's just having the time of his life playing football. You're like, that's a huge thing. If guys are having fun, you're going to be at your best when you're enjoying it and if you can create that environment and to still be here, all these guys are going to go to work, good things will happen.

**Q. You've spent your career so far playing for kind of a young, innovative offensive guy. Are you excited or care to see how it is playing for a defensive-minded head coach?**

COOPER KUPP: Yeah, that'll be interesting. That'll be interesting. I know there's so many different ways people do it. I'm not sure how involved Mike is on the offensive side of things or how he does things, but I am looking forward to it. I've only heard all the guys here love him. I've only heard great things about it, and really looking forward to just the staff he has in general. Everyone here has been great, and the excitement around football and what's building here, you can feel it.

It's going to be fun come mid-April being up here again and getting to work.

**Q. Having prepared for and played against his defenses a couple times, what stands out about a Mike Macdonald defense?**

COOPER KUPP: Yeah, we've talked about playing as one, and that's a huge thing. You've got to have guys that -- the best defenses, guys play off each other. They understand when they're showing pressures and things like that. One guy is off, it tips the whole thing off. You have to be as one from the very beginning, from the

communication of all your checks to being able to show your bluffs to be able to get to your coverages to be able to match those up with the fronts and the things that are happening with the defensive line, the stunts. All that, I've respected the way that guys have brought that to life. You can see the coaching that's been done as players have been able to play free, be able to get in positions where they're put in positions to succeed defensively. It just becomes very hard offensively where guys just don't mess up. Guys are going to play their leverage. They're going to be in the spots they're supposed to be at. You respect that about a defense. That's to me the telling sign of good defenses is when you see that.

**Q. What is the story behind that Pearl Jam T-shirt?**

COOPER KUPP: They're from Seattle. No, so I learned guitar when I was in sixth grade-ish, somewhere in there, just taught myself, and it's been something I've loved learning. I don't have a great musical ear, but I love playing music. My wife is a singer. She's the musical one. I just try to learn enough songs for her to sing to them. There's been enough stuff where as you come up, as you grow, there's the grunge scene in Seattle is obviously huge, similar to some really good music from LA, and so I just figured I've got a bunch of these old vintage grunge rock band tees, I might as well wear the Pearl Jam one today.

**Q. What's your go-to Pearl Jam song?**

COOPER KUPP: Well, there's an album called "Ten," ironically enough, that's pretty good. You throw that one on, you won't be going wrong.

**Q. Super Bowl LVI, what's your memory of that game?**

COOPER KUPP: Winning it was probably the biggest memory. That last drive, the last drive offensively was pretty special, just the -- you go from really you're in a roadblock, you can't get anything going, and it's football. It's like, hey, we are going to find a way to get some momentum, get something moving this thing forward. It's a cool part about this game is like, man, nothing can be going right, and it just takes maybe one play, one spark, and you find a way and suddenly it becomes very easy. You feel like you can just do whatever you want to and you're trucking the ball down the field.

That belief grows, and then once you have that belief, it's hard to get that thing taken away. I think that's a -- speaking on that, that's a special thing, too, about teams in general, and a big thing that played into wanting to come to Seattle is there's a belief here. There's a belief -- there's organizations in this league that believe they're going to



lose, and there's organizations that believe they're going to win. Here in Seattle, it's always been -- you've always seen that believe that they're going to find a way to win the game. That's a very powerful thing in this league because belief is what it takes to get that spark, to get that opportunity, and as long as you have that belief, you've always got a chance. Excited to be a part of that.

**Q. What was Jake Peetz' impact on your game when you guys were in LA together?**

COOPER KUPP: Peetz doesn't do anything, man. He's standing back there right now, so I said that.

Peetz has been awesome. He was in my room. Before he came here, he was in the room with us as wide receivers, and a huge part in just the way that we operated. The concepts, the purpose behind what we're doing, it's the details, it's those little things that makes the difference, and he was in that room to make sure that that stuff was communicated from the top down, how we're doing these things and being able to make sure that we're being put in positions to understand what the why is behind the concepts that we're running. Real thankful for him and just his knowledge of the game, from a defensive side, from an offensive side, how we're manipulating things defensively and what we're trying to accomplish offensively, that stuff goes a long way.

If you can play that way as a receiver, if you can get to the point where you can play fast still with that mindset of understanding what you're manipulating, it gives you a huge advantage. Really thankful for Peetz and what he meant to me there, and excited to be back here with him.

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