

Seattle Seahawks Media Conference

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Leonard Williams

Weekday Press Conference



Q. Is it a big deal that the entire team is here for these practices?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I think it is a big deal because obviously this part is mandatory, but I think throughout all of OTAs the vets have been doing a good job of showing up.

There's been times where they've missed a few days, but I think overall just the overall vibe of the team I feel like everyone is locked on and wants to be here.

Q. Let's talk about the connection of this room. How much are you feeling that as players that this group is just really well-connected?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I feel it a lot. I'm obviously going into year 11, so I've played a lot of football, been on a lot of teams. Not only am I seeing that we have a very talented team right now, but one thing that stands out above the talent is just the connection.

That's something that I've been trying to talk to the guys that's really going to take us to that next level where we want to go because I've told them I've been on tons of talented teams that, you know, we have great players in all positions, but we just didn't have that same connection.

You know, we had a ten-win season but didn't go to the playoffs and stuff like that. I'm telling them how those small things, like having connection and being able to communicate on and off the field, kind of helps you get to that next level.

Q. What are you seeing with this team, all the continuity? How are you seeing the flow and how things are in sync out there compared to what it was like this time last year?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I think it's a huge different every difference. The coaches got here first time on the staff together last year, and obviously everyone wanted to be

bought in and things like that, but it was still new, it was still fresh. I feel like there was a learning curve where the coaches were learning the players, the players were learning the coaches. You know, coaches were even learning each other.

I think this year we kind of have a year under our belt now. We kind of know what to expect out of Mike. He know what to expect out of AD and everyone else, all the other coaches. Now we're able to actually, like, just turn it up a notch, you know what I mean?

Everything that we started to integrate last year, it's kind of like we're just building on that now.

Q. You saw him on Dallas for a while, but what's been your impression of DeMarcus coming in?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I mean, we haven't been able to be in pads and stuff like that yet. I haven't been able to see him fully play. We haven't been able to play next to each other or anything like that, but I think the type of leadership and mindset that he brings to the team is just, like, phenomenal.

He is a dog. He speaks a lot. He plays hard. He's going into year 12, and he's out there practicing harder than some of the rookies. We're getting on the rookies like saying, Okay, this is an example. This guy is going into year 12. He has nothing to prove, but he's out there working his craft as hard as he can every day.

He's one of the guys that shows up as an example and also as leadership.

Q. You've been going against the offensive line. Obviously there are some changes. I guess what's the difference in that and what (indiscernible)?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Again, it's going to be hard to say until we get in pads and camp and stuff like that, but so far something that has stood out to me is the communication and just like the drive and want-to. I could just see a different mindset, and it starts with just even the approach to the line.

I'm seeing them break out of the huddle and just attack the line, and that kind of puts pressure on the defense and



especially me playing up front as a D-lineman, I have to try to hurry up and get in my stance when they come out that fast.

I've been trying to encourage them to keep doing that and that it puts pressure on defenses.

Q. What are your impressions of Brandon Pili?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Oh, Pili, he's been one of those guys throughout OTAs that stood out for us because he even in meetings the other day I guess he put on the most muscle. Like, I guess we've been doing body scans and stuff like that, and he put on the most muscle out of everyone throughout OTAs.

You can just see a huge jump from week one of OTAs until now. You can also just see a confidence level growing in him, and he's been more vocal, just more confident, and just having fun out there. I think he's becoming a good player for us.

Q. You had one of the best seasons of your career last year. This offseason, looking at film and looking back on the season, what are a few things that stood out, like, this is what I'm going to attack this offseason to get better at?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I mean, for me I made a lot of big plays out of power, which is never going to go away for me. That's my bread and butter. That's my game. That's something that I rely on play in and play out is just being able to power guys when I want to.

But I think something that me and AD are working on is being able to learn when I can, like, do more finesse stuff, take an edge, and you know, really keep the O-linemen guessing on what type of moves I'm going to give them.

I think last year I was doing a lot of like bull rushes, power moves, and stuff like that. I want to try to integrate some type of counters off of when the offensive lineman is trying to sit on my power.

Q. Looking back on it, how impactful was the addition of Ernest in the middle of last season?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Huge. He actually just talked to the defense today, and we made a big emphasis on how he came middle of the season last year and how we were struggling with the run game, you know, kind of pretty much the whole beginning part of the season and somehow as soon as EJ got here, you know, we kind of turned that run game defense around.

You know, he had a lot of expectations on him coming in, like starting out middle linebacker. He clearly had to learn a whole new defense, a whole new city, whole new team. There was a lot of pressure on him, and he answered it.

He was the leader of the defense, called the calls with confidence and played hard, made plays. It was awesome to see him get a new contract, and I'm excited to keep playing with him.

Q. He addressed the team today?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Yeah. I think something that's been cool and a part of the connection that's been, like, helping us grow that connection throughout OTAs is in the defensive room coaches have been having some of the guys that go up to the front of the room and pretty much talk about their why, like why they like playing football, why they like showing up every day.

They put up some pictures of their family, a picture of them when they were young, and just talk about what's their driving force.

Q. How has that helped the chemistry?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I think it helps a lot because you get to hear from some guys that you might not always hear from, and then you get to hear, like, someone's why.

There are times where obviously going through camp that's going to be hard. Everyone has tough days, hard days. If I see somebody having a hard or tough day, I understand that guy a little deeper now on a human level, and I can talk to him and let him know, hey, I know his why now, and I know how to push him a little better now.

Q. What's your why?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I mean, I haven't been able to talk to the defense about my why yet, but for me I think just football gave me everything I have in life. I grew up homeless at times. I grew up living in and out of hotels, motels, and kind of unstable lifestyle as a young kid.

When I found football in high school, it gave me stability, it gave me good male role models in my life, and it just gave me something to kind of distract myself from everything going on at home.

For me after that just learning from coaches, good male role models in my life, I just fell in love with it, fell in love with the camaraderie, the family aspect of my teammates and stuff like that.

I'm sure every single person at this point, it never was about the money. The money ends up coming with it obviously, but for every single person that talks about their why, it's because they had some type of lifestyle like that growing up and then it kind of brought them to this point.

Q. Was there a particular coach in high school that got you into football as much as you became?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Coach Keynodo Hudson. He was a DB coach at Illinois when Spoon was there too. Me and Spoon both know him pretty well, and Spoon was joking when I got traded here about how we both had him as one of our male role model figures.

I had him in high school, and I had him at USC as well. He definitely helped me when I didn't like going to class and didn't like doing schoolwork and all that stuff because he understood my why, and he kind of helped push me when I was going through hard times growing up.

Q. Leadership seems to be part of who you are. When did you get that awareness that you have such an impact?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Honestly since like high school. I just started playing football, and I didn't understand how to be a leader necessarily. I didn't understand what that role meant and how to be a leader, but you know, every year I was voted as a leader. Every year I was voted as a captain since high school, college, NFL years.

I was always one of those type of guys on the team where I just had an infectious personality. I think my type of leadership is I made people feel safe, so I'm able to actually get people's why in a one-on-one setting. I'm good at, like, holding them to that.

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