

Seattle Seahawks Media Conference

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Coach Mike Macdonald Weekday Press Conference



MIKE MACDONALD: All right, for us, looking forward to a football Thursday. For you, it's a Wednesday, so here we are. But good to see everybody.

What we got?

Q. When you got a player like Brock Purdy who is not a typical runner but is really elusive, at what point do you prioritize like a running quarterback and keeping him in the pocket over...progression, passing?

MIKE MACDONALD: Look, there is definitely a balance. Not all plays are the same based off the situation. He's doing a great job. He really is. I mean, there is a lot of plays where he's throwing on time and layering throws over hook players and seeing defenses kind of before it happens and making you pay that way. Obviously making a lot of plays, extending plays and being creative and using his playmaking ability as well.

I think it depends on the situation, what you have called, how you're trying to attack him.

Q. When you got a guy like Christian McCaffrey who is so involved in the run game and the pass game, what do you try to take away first?

MIKE MACDONALD: All the plays. That's what you -- again, terrible answer, but it's by situation again. You know, like who do you have on the field? Who do they have on the field? Where is the ball? You know, are you trying to attack? Are you trying to kind of hedge? Are you just -- those are the things you're thinking about.

But he's definitely someone you have to account for at all times. And they do a great job moving him around. I mean, he can do everything, so you have to account for everything.

It's a great challenge.

Q. Mike, what's your left tackle situation right now?

MIKE MACDONALD: We have some tackles that can play. Josh can play. He's going to play. If Charles gets better and can play, he'll play. If not, we got some other guys that can play.

Q. So Cross is potentially playing this week?

MIKE MACDONALD: Well, I mean, some things need to happen before -- obviously not going through yesterday, but I would say it's a nonzero chance that he plays.

We'll see.

Q. Will he practice today, Charles?

MIKE MACDONALD: I don't believe so. I don't believe so. Unless something changed in the last couple hours.

Q. Sounds like Josh is okay?

MIKE MACDONALD: We'll see how Josh practices today. He's going through walk-through now. See how it goes.

Q. What happened with him in the game?

MIKE MACDONALD: Just banged up a little bit.

Q. What about Rashid Shaheed?

MIKE MACDONALD: To my knowledge he's practicing today. In what capacity, I can't tell you. Should be out there.

Q. You guys I don't think had a player that's had a play the following week. Is that a policy for you guys or is it if they pass the protocol they can play?

MIKE MACDONALD: Pretty sure -- did Tyrice Knight come back and play? He didn't that next week? He missed a game?

No, it's not a policy. Just going by the protocol, so...

Q. And Coby, is he getting better?

MIKE MACDONALD: Coby is getting better, yeah. He is not going to practice today. He did walk-through. Again,



we'll see. I know those guys are working like crazy, but we're going into football Friday; probably have to do something before the game goes.

Q. If Rashid Shaheed can't go for some reason, Dareke Young, Jake Bobo, what do you expect from those guys?

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, played great football for us. I think we have a really deep receiving room and guys that have made plays in key moments from training camp all the way to now. That's what we expect, you know. So yeah, we got really good players.

Q. You guys have played in just about every style of game so far.

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah.

Q. Feel like all those different types of games you played have helped prepare the team for this type of...

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, I would rather it be this way than just being able to only win one way. That's probably the most you can take out of it. It's a message for our team. We're on our second year of our program here and we're trying to learn how to win and, you know, make that our expectation, make that the standard for our team, you know.

And so I think it's been great for our team to realize there is multiple ways to do it, that they can trust each other that someone is -- we're going to figure out a way to put ourselves in contention at the end of the game no matter how the game starts.

Q. Earning the right to play meaningful games is something you said obviously. As far as the regular season is concerned, this is up there. How do you balance that stakes and earning that right but with 1-0 football sort of thing?

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, I mean, we got here by our mentality on how we approach every day. That's what we'll do this week. That's what we'll do next week, whether we're playing or not. That's just how we're going to roll.

Just cleans it up. You know, it's like just worry about the stuff we can control. Right now it's, hey, we got an opportunity to move around outside and get our timing down and clean up some early down stuff, work on third down, red zone. Those are the things our guys are thinking about right now.

There are some things we feel like we need to be able to

do to play really good ball and give ourselves a chance to win. We'll check that at the end of practice and see the progress. That's what we do on Thursdays, so that's honestly what we're focused on.

Q. Mike, how has this team held each other accountable through the season and grown from that process, and what role has your leadership played?

MIKE MACDONALD: I'm not a big like the word "accountable" guy. It's like to me it's got a negative connotation. We're more like an integrity type of thing. Hey, we're going to do what we say we're going to do. We said we want to operate a certain way. We said we want to be a certain type of team. We said we want to practice and walk-through and play a game a certain way.

We all agreed that's how we want to operate, and that's lead by a lot our leaders on our team. And really it's part of my job to make sure we're doing what we said we were going to do. There is ways to get that done and ways to communicate it, but I think it's really that simple.

That way you're just not -- I respect all the quick questions, but it is -- a lot of it is deviated from where our concentration is all the time. That's really what we're trying to focus on all the time.

Q. Are you one of those people that sets New Year's goals?

MIKE MACDONALD: No. Did you think -- what would be the odds out there for that?

Q. You're a process guy. (Laughter.) You did have some goals for what you wanted to accomplish this year. Obviously some of those are still ahead of you.

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah.

Q. How much has this season gone according to what you expected versus maybe deviated?

MIKE MACDONALD: I expect to win every game we play. That's what we expect. Like quick funny story. High school coach I worked for, Xarvia Smith, took us on a retreat when we were at Cedar Shoals. He asked us how many games we think we should win. I think I told this story before.

You got ten games in high school and so we all take a sheet of paper out and hand it in to him, thankfully anonymously. He looks and reads them out. All right, well, go ahead and let me know how many games you expect us to lose right now so we don't have to play them.

Makes a lot of sense.

Q. How many wins did you write on that sheet? Do you remember?

MIKE MACDONALD: It wasn't ten. Yeah, it was dumb by me. Lesson learned.

Q. ... since that first game against the 49ers?

MIKE MACDONALD: I think with the exception of a couple plays, I thought Riq played well that game. But I can tell you this: He's playing really good football right now. Playing really good football. Playing great football. So really proud of him. Happy for him. It's great for the Seahawks, great for him, everybody involved. But he's playing really good football for us. Attention to detail, technique, practice, all those things are on point right now. It's really great.

Q. Is he your starter there? Snap count suggests he's starting.

MIKE MACDONALD: I think we have three starting corners.

Q. Mike, we've heard from John Schneider for years as far as no ego. He doesn't want wars between personnel and coaching. For you coming in, how has that helped you do your job and how has it helped shape the team we have now?

MIKE MACDONALD: It's essential. To me it's critical, especially for a guy like me coming in, you're new, a lot of things you don't know, a lot of things you don't know that you don't know.

I think a critical part of success is being able to be authentic and go through those experiences without feeling like someone is breathing down your neck or so and so wants to act a certain way.

No, all we're doing is trying to chase this vision of who we want to become as an organization and John is -- one, he set the tone of that from Jody, but Jon is kind of the living, breathing example here on a daily basis, and he's created an incredible environment to work. You know, I mean it's just been awesome. I love working with him. Kind of always know what -- like he's got great perspective but knows what to say in those situations.

He's obviously been through a ton. You get fooled into like he's a younger GM, but he's been around forever and he's kind of seen everything.

But it's been awesome. He's really great. He's really great. He's probably uncomfortable me talking about him like that, but I think it's an opportunity to talk about the rest of our personnel staff. I mean, from our scouts to the guys in the building, man, they are really great at what they do. The way they operate, too, is a great example for me coming in. Okay, like this is how I would like us to operate, too, and it meshes.

So it's just a really great group to work with. No matter the season, whether we're in season or draft or whatever, it just feels like there is no drag and we can work together and scrimmage things out and all with the focus of what's best for us.

Q. How much of all that has been a factor when you talk about the depth and the guys stepping up, all the different players?

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, we talked about it -- I forget my days here, but I think it might have been the last media session was just that the 70 (?) Matters. That's the way that John really envisioned it. I think the actions have backed it up. Talk about integrity. It's what we said we wanted to do and they have done a great job of bringing in players.

I love that our staff has a developmental mindset. We're coaching everybody all the time. Shouldn't be anybody on our roster just coming to work and hanging out just grabbing lunch and going home. No, you're here to work and develop and get better and play your best football here for us.

Q. It's not all that common for a team to change quarterbacks one offseason and win at least 13 games and be in in position for the No. 1 seed. Looking back in the change and John's role in that, what can you say about how well that's worked out so far?

MIKE MACDONALD: I think it speaks to the vision of what we have as a team of what we want to become. It's one of those methods things. Hey, the principles, this is where we want to go, and then who is going to be here, how we're going to get it done. All those things are sometimes not under your control, and so when you go back and you look through that kind of time of the offseason, maybe to an outsider's perspective it felt like a lot of decisions that happened really fast, but John did a great job navigating us through it.

Especially a guy like me, you know, don't necessarily know all the steps that happens in those things, but just kind of sequential, one decision after another. You know, one of

my favorite quotes, made it as simple as possible but not simpler, which is cool.

Q. Kyle Shanahan has been at this for a while. Seems like there are some new wrinkles. How much does he change over the course of a season?

MIKE MACDONALD: A lot. I think the great offensive playcallers and designers in our league evolve consistently, you know, and he's done it with the best of them. He's a great playcaller, great play designer, great coach. You can tell that by how they execute and how they evolve as well.

They are getting to the same concepts. It's hard to invent new plays all the time, but it's variations of similar concepts that they have run and are really good at and they've run for a long time.

But the art behind it is getting to it before you realize on defense, and so they're really good at it.

Q. They been really good on third down, Purdy.

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah.

Q. Is that a function of -- do teams really have different third down kind of offenses and packages they can really go to?

MIKE MACDONALD: Oh, yeah. It's just a different phase of the game, you know. But when you look at it and you turn the tape on, oh, well, maybe it's one thing. No, it's everything. They're protecting Brock well. He's making decisive decisions. He's been accurate and been able to extend plays as well and creating maybe when the first couple reads aren't there as with will.

Kind of like the whole page on third down right now.

Q. Two of your best rushing performances of the season came in the last two weeks. What do you like about what was going on right now? What's maybe switched in that direction to get you guys more successful there?

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, I think we've just stuck to our process and really believed in what we're doing. Just kind of stuck at it, believed in we got a great system, really good players. We got really good football plays. Let's go stick at it and iron this thing out and keep attacking it and hopefully it will come to life at some point.

We're still not there. We're always trying to grow and get better. You know, things aren't going your way after a

couple weeks and all of a sudden you turn into like a different type of team, that's not the way to go.

Q. Lost Nick early in the first game against the Niners.

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah.

Q. Back in the rematch and...

MIKE MACDONALD: Well, I just think really proud of Nick. I mean, we have gotten questions about him throughout the year. I feel like my answer is not because it's -- it's a tribute to him that the answers are consistent on his approach. That's a very mature way of just going about his business every day, and I think that has shown in like his like execution, execution level where he is able to play decisive and play fast.

And he's grown. We continue to put stuff on his plate and he's making plays, and I think the cool thing now is the vets realize how important he is to our defense as well. So he's really earned a big time role within our defense, which is -- one, it's not easy to do and, two, it's a shoutout to him. That's big time stuff.

Q. Did you know he was that mature during the pre-draft process or was that something you learned after he got here?

MIKE MACDONALD: Take your word for it that he's our type of guy. Had him in for a visit and really enjoyed our time with him. The thing that really stuck out when he was here was he was so -- he was really excited to learn the stuff. You know, he wanted to be coached and Jeff spent a lot of time with him. We kind of both left those meetings really excited for the opportunity for him to be with us.

That's what we're going off of. That's what showed. That's what showed up since he walked in the door.

Q. You talked about how the 49ers offense has evolved. Looking back to the first game of the season, you guys learn some lessons in that first game that helps the rest of the year?

MIKE MACDONALD: Man, it's a long time ago. I think it's -- I think you're learning things after every game. Like that's the way you have to operate. You have to kind of keep tinkering, widdling away. Get rid of some things you feel like are not your fastballs and I think it starts to really clear up and streamline as the year starts to go, especially with our run game.

Feel like we narrowed it down a little bit as the season has gone on, which is good. That's the way it should be.

So it is a little bit different than how we handled some of those games in Baltimore and Michigan.

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Q. You talked about letting the game declare itself. Does the quarterback have to do any of that as well, feel how the game is declaring itself?

MIKE MACDONALD: That's interesting. I think so. I think that plays a part in how we play for sure.

Q. Do you see Sam do that in some of the stretches here?

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, the awesome thing about Sam is he figures it out. There will be plays here and there just like the rest of our team that we're going to want to be better at. The guy is a problem solver, a fighter, a competitor. He's going to figure it out as the game goes on which is awesome.

Q. You've described his demeanor a bunch of times I think, including on Monday. You said he's the same guy every day. Why is that important for a quarterback to be like that?

MIKE MACDONALD: Well, it's the hardest position to play in sports in my opinion. There is a lot of noise that goes with it. It's kind of like us as a football team, too, I think we have to have a vision who we wants to be as a player, a person, a team. Just stick to that and just chase that all the time.

If you get out of whack from the results or conditions or the surroundings, things around you, it's hard to stay on track. That's how I see it.

I also think it's important like as the personality of your offense as well. If things aren't really going your way, everything is going haywire, he's kind of a steadying force for those guys as well.

Q. John and Jim Harbaugh, brothers with different personalities. How do they approach big games? Obviously they coached in a lot of them.

MIKE MACDONALD: Well, I think it's varied. I think it's varied and I think the thing that they share in common is basically it's about the team that they have. The cool thing is it's like both their personalities are through their approach.

I'll say this: I love the way that both of them did it, but one of the things that I learned in the last year or so is like we're going to -- this is us. The principle of the matter is we're making -- trying to do what's best for our team on how we want to operate.

