

Seattle Seahawks Media Conference

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Leonard Williams

Weekday Press Conference



Q. What's the word on the whole Dark Side thing?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I think throughout the season we were just feeling like we had a really special defense, you know, special players, and we were also just doing special things.

You know we always hear of Legion of Boom, especially being in here. We were like starting to get to a point like hey, maybe we deserve our own name, you know? I think guys started coming up with names and stuff like that and I think Dark Side kind of stuck with us.

Q. That was last year that that came about?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: It was more like the beginning of this year. Yeah, I think a few of us were on the bus. I remember me, J-Reed, D-Law, some of the older guys, and I think it was -- we were talking about how it's like dark here and we always talk about a style nobody wants to play and shows like Lumen Field with the Needle and the atmosphere here, and I think Dark Side just kind of represents that.

Q. (Regarding actually coming up with the name.)

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I don't think one person would want to take credit for it honestly. It was kind of a group effort. Yeah, I definitely brought it up to some of the guys, but it wasn't necessarily my idea of saying Dark Side.

Q. Some of the guys talked about in the last game against the Rams the crowd noise was challenging communication on defense. How do you guys go about addressing that knowing that's who you're going to be playing in the playoffs, and not giving too much away?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I think it's something that we already addressed early on. We were doing a great job of winning on the road. You know, from last year and then beginning of this year that's something we wanted to work

on is winning at home, and that was a challenge for us on defense, is how do we communicate, how do we dial in when the crowd is so noisy?

We've learned to communicate nonverbally and things like that and been winning at home, so I think luckily, you know, we addressed it early on already.

Q. How excited are you for that home playoff atmosphere?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I'm so excited. I love playing in Lumen Field. Even from the outside perspective it's one of the best stadiums to play in. Being part of this organization and now actually playing in the stadium as a home team, it's even more electric.

You know, bringing the playoff games here is going to be incredible.

Q. Did you hear from any old teammates about the way that game went on Saturday, getting the No. 1 seed?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: What's that?

Q. Did you hear from any old teammates, reach out to you?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Yeah, my boy Dexter Lawrence hit me up. Probably going to be in my suite for the game. He's flying out here next weekend to come support me. It's going to be awesome to see him and his wife and his new baby.

He definitely hit me up and was just saying congratulations and he was happy for me. He's obviously seen me through a lot of my journey as well.

Q. You guys based off Sundays results ended up with the top scoring defense in the NFL. What does that mean to you to allow the fewest points in the league for a season?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I mean, it means a lot. I think we work really hard. We value so many things on defense: stopping the run, blitzing, getting the quarterback, rushing with force, stopping the run with force, all these things. It



led to us being -- not allowing teams to score too much.

I think that it means a lot to us, especially it's a defense that wants to have our own name with the Dark Side. You know, you got to show it.

Q. What do you attribute that -- you ended up allowing like almost a yard fewer per play this year. A lot of improvement from last year. What do you attribute that to?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: To me it's stopping the run. I think early in the beginning of the season last year we weren't doing a great job stopping the run. You know, the guys upstairs made some great moves and calls and brought in Ernest Jones and Demarcus Lawrence, a few other players.

You seen the immediate impact from those guys, you know. I think we just been sound at stopping the run and it's pretty much opened up the rest of our defense when we can stop the run.

Q. ... feels like specifically stopping the run, tackling really good, tackling in space. What makes a team good at tackling, especially as the season goes on when that's not something you normally practice?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Yeah, I mean, honestly, it is something we practice all the time. We talk about it every day in meetings. We call it EAT. It's just effort, angles, and tackling. We talk about how we swarm to the football, all 11 of us. You know, when we pause the frame when a guy is tackled, we want to see how many of our helmets are in the picture, because that shows the effort getting to the ball.

And then we also practice angles a lot in practice how to attack near hips and through the second man in or the first man in and things of that nature.

So I think that's something we actually practice and work on a lot, which is a small fundamental that a lot of players probably forget about. It's something we harp on a lot here.

Q. You guys are having a lot of (indiscernible.) You're doing that playing a defense where you're playing nickel most of the time. How much pride do you guys kind of have as a front to put that together knowing you're playing two deep, nickel defense, and still nobody is able to really kind of cut you guys up front?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Yeah, I mean, as much as it feels good to get a sack, that feels just as good to hear. You

know, when we can play with two high safety and stop the run with just four down linemen, knowing that at least two or three of us are getting double teams. That means, you know, not only are we stopping the double team but we are beating the double teams.

Murph is one of the best in the league that I've seen do it in my career and he's a young guy. To see our front be able to stop the run with just four guys is a testament to how we value and take pride in stopping the run.

Q. Lots of folks notice athletic ability for teams on the field. Seems like you guys got a hyperbolic IQ on the defensive side on every level. How much does having that aspect elevate the overall play?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: That helps for sure. I think the effort and all that stuff erases mistakes. I think like we talk about high effort just because if someone does happen to miss a tackle we have like ten other guys swarming to the ball.

But this year we been doing great job tackling and we been ahead of plays like you just said. Like the knowledge of football has been there as well. You know, like I think it's -- I think that's when you really see big plays. Like when you see EJ is, E-man making TFLs, like big plays like that, it's because they're ahead of play. They've studied film. We've been locked in on small things, small details throughout the week things you can actually go out there and steal a play or two.

Q. Are there guys on the defensive side that are most common to come up to you or you going up to someone else and saying, hey, I saw this?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think EJ is one of those guys. 'Spoon is also another guy. I hear him and Julian talking a lot in the back end about small things they see. You know, Demarcus Lawrence, we talk about him and Chenna. We try to find like who we can see delta on and delta keys on who, which O-line men is giving it away, and things like that.

Q. When you played in the playoffs, did it feel different than a regular season game?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: What's that?

Q. When you played the playoffs, do the playoffs feel different than a regular season game? If so, how?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Yeah, it did feel different. It was my first time in the playoffs so it was obviously a bigger game. We were excited to be there, but at the same time,

even that playoff time feels different than this playoff time.

I think when I made it before we kind of -- it was almost like we kind of just -- like we were almost like how did we get here type of situation? Whereas like now it's like we look at each other like, yeah, we were meant to be here. This is our destiny. We worked hard for this. Things like that.

So even both of my playoff experiences are already felt different.

Q. How different is it having to dial it down this week for a playoff bye week?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Yeah, definitely something I haven't had, but I appreciate the way the guys are going about it. We're not are treating it like a regular season bye week where guys are flying to Mexico and Hawai'i and enjoying their time.

I think we really celebrated that win against the Niners, but immediately that next day you could tell guys were like, hey, the job is not done. We got a lot of work to do. That's still the same mindset right now. Guys are going to take a few days away, mentally, physically take care of their bodies, but I think we're all focused right now.

Q. You practiced in the rain today.

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Yeah.

Q. How was that?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I didn't practice today but it was a pretty competitive practice just from watching. The guys were going at it. Again, that's a testament to our team. It would be easy to go out there and kind of, you know, be lackadaisical and relax and chill on a bye week, but guys are out there competing and trying to find ways to get better. That's what's been getting us here.

Q. As someone who played with Nick and against great Grey, what have those two rookies meant to the team's success?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Huge. I mean, not even just their playmaking ability but their energy. Seeing young guys being able to show their energy, show their personality, show their enthusiastic personalities is huge.

I'm seeing Grey during games like coming up to me and hyping up the D-line, saying, hey, guys, give us a play; we got you guys. Just having a young guy be able to have motivation like that is big.

Their play also just speaks high volumes.

Q. You mentioned Legion of Boom when you were talking about the Dark Side nickname. A comparison is going to get made. How do you weigh that? Obviously you're a different team, different players, different scheme, everything. Do you like comparisons like that or, hey, we're...

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I personally don't like comparisons, especially because they were a great defense. They had great players. But that was years ago. You know, it's hard to compare. It's like you don't want a new team and a new staff and a new player coming in and trying to chase a shadow of something else.

It's like we want to have our own identity. To me it makes sense why fan bases and people outside of here make comparisons like that because they were a great team that was here before, but for us inside we always knew we wanted our own identity.

Q. Sam obviously plays on the other side of the ball. What do you think Sam's defining trait as a leader is?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: To me it's the way he works. You know, we talk about it sometimes, we're flying on the plane and guys are hanging out and having a good time shadow boxing, messing around, and you just see Sam, he's just sitting there watching film, taking notes. He's studying up until the last second.

I think that's just the way he approaches work every day and it's impressive.

Q. Being beside Charles, what was he like going against in practice and just in the locker room?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I mean, he's another one of those guys that's very consistent. The way he works, his work ethic is incredible. He's a great player. He's a great leader in the O-line room, so I'm happy for him.

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