

Seattle Seahawks Media Conference

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Leonard Williams

Weekday Press Conference



Q. What do you like about the perceived challenge of playing the same team in back-to-back games, or is it a challenge?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I mean, I think it's definitely a challenge. We're in the playoffs. Every team is good at this point. They've clearly showed that they have a good offense. But at the same time, I trust our team. That's the last team we played. We had a bye week. We had multiple weeks to study them, and we're still trying to find even more nuggets to play faster.

Q. The line on your shirt, is that a reference to what DeMarcus Lawrence said?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Yes, sir. I couldn't put the rest of it on there.

Q. What difference does it make with Trent Williams back in the lineup for them?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I think it makes a big difference. He's a big presence on their team. He's one of the leaders of their offense. I know he's a little bit banged up right now, but just having his presence on the field goes a long way for them.

Q. You've had some moments in the past few years where you've lined up over Trent Williams on the right side. What kind of match-up has that been for you?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Yeah, it's interesting, I think even on other teams with different coordinators, a lot of times when I've faced against Trent Williams, they like to put me out there against him. I think just having a bigger body, bigger presence on him kind of helps eliminate some of the run game. The ball likes to run behind him. The ball likes to go to the C-gap. So I think just having a bigger body on him kind of helps with that.

Q. When you talk about the 12s, you guys have been playing for this all year. How exciting is it to finally

have that stadium full on Saturday?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: It's really exciting. That's something we've been putting an emphasis on all year from the start of camp. We knew it was something that we didn't do a good job of last year winning at home, and I think we did a better job of that this year, and the stadium has been on fire lately. I'm looking forward to seeing it even more on fire this Saturday. I can't wait to hear the 12s out there.

Q. You're on the field; how real is that factor to an opposing offense?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: It's real, especially when they're getting loud during their huddle. I think that's when it's most effective. If they're getting loud after the huddle breaks, I think they kind of already know what's going on. It kind of helps with their checks and stuff like that.

But when they're specifically loud while they're huddling, it makes it extremely hard for the offense. Sometimes it's even hard for us on defense to communicate, but I think we've been playing home, it's been loud all season, so we've found ways to communicate non-verbally on defense, and we want them to be as loud as possible this Saturday.

Q. What do you think you guys did to play a little better at home this year, to have the record beat there?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Honestly, I think it's just the way we prep every week, treating every week the same, whether on the road, whether at home, whether we're in the playoffs, whether it's week one, whether it's a preseason game. I think we prep the same every week, and I think it's been showing up at home this year.

Like I said, it feels great to bring that home and bring it to the 12s.

Q. Why does it tend to be a bigger deal for the offense to try to hear the offensive play call in their huddle compared to the defense hearing the defensive play call when you're all doing it in the same level --

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Sorry, can you repeat that?



... when all is said, we're done.®

Q. You were just saying that it's sometimes hard for you guys to hear the defensive play call when you're playing at home with the noise, but it always seems to be more difficult on the offense. Why do you think that is?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I think the offense has a lot longer play call. Sometimes our defensive guys will start laughing when we hear Sam make a call in the huddle. We're just like, whoa, that's a lot. Sometimes on defense we see ball, get ball, we play more reactionary football. We have quick, to-the-point calls. Sometimes we have switch-up calls and things like that, but we're used to playing at home now. We're used to playing in a loud environment. Like I said, we've found ways to communicate nonverbally, get to our checks easier.

It's really hard on an offense when the quarterback has to have a cadence and a receiver out there might not even be able to hear the quarterback because it's so loud in there. He's getting off the ball a little bit slower. Offensive linemen are having false starts and stuff like that because of the crowd noise.

Q. I think this is your first home playoff game that you've had, right?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Yeah.

Q. What are you looking forward to out of that experience, and how different do you think it'll be from the couple road games you've seen before in a playoff situation?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: It means a lot for me to be in this situation. I've addressed it, talked about it before to the press. I've talked about it to my teammates. It's rare to be in a situation like this.

The best part about our team is we're treating it the same every week, and I think that's what's gotten us to this point. We can't make this moment bigger than week 18, week 1. It's just another week for us. It's week 19. It's definitely special for me to have a home playoff game, though.

Q. Is that easier said than done, to just make this like any other week?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I think it is easier said than done, but I think because we've been living that life for so long, it's already engrained in us. I think if you are now getting to this point and now saying that, it's going to be hard to be like, okay, it's just another week when we haven't treated it all season like that.

But I think we've done a good job of being that way through camp all the way up until this moment. For us, it's not just lip service anymore. It's like, we actually live this life.

Q. You started putting down some roots here with your family. Can you feel the community anticipation for the playoffs?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Yeah, for sure. I love Seattle. I feel blessed every day that I'm here. I joke around with Schneider and some of those guys, like me and Julian, we're always saying thank you to those guys for bringing us over here.

The community is special. I noticed it in my very first game here. We had a road game against the Ravens, and we got blew out like 40 something to like 10. Mike was over there. Glad he's over here now.

But I remember getting home like super late because it was a late East Coast game, I'm driving home from the facility at like 3:00 a.m., and there's literally fans lined up out there and cheering us on. I'm just like, it's 3:00 a.m. and we just lost and these people are taking the time to still cheer for us. I'm not used to that. I've been in stadiums where we're losing at halftime and our own fans are booing us and leaving the stadium. This is a special community, and it feels good to bring it to them.

Q. When Mike talked about 12 as one, what does that mean to you on defense?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: To me it means like having the crowd on our side is a big part of it. Just overwhelming presence where like it feels like there's more than just 11 players on the field, and a part of that is our play style on defense, as well.

A lot of times we see the ball carrier on the ground, we pause the film to see how many blue helmets are in the picture. A majority of the time it's nine plus players standing over the ball carrier, and over time that's just overwhelming and intimidating to offenses, when an offensive guy is getting off the ground and he's seeing 10 Seahawks around him, after a while it's like they're getting hit by so many of us, they're getting swarmed by so many of us. It just feels like there's more than 11 guys on the field.

Q. When you first met Devon Witherspoon, what was your impression of him?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I just thought he had little man syndrome or something. For a small guy, that guy, he's chirping, he's talking, he's on fire. He plays with his head

cut off and just like on fire. To me, I just love it because I'm in the trenches, and a lot of times I see guys getting slammed by D-linemen, like big guys. But I'm seeing Witherspoon flying down the field, making TFLs, slamming running backs that weigh more than him.

I think him bringing that passion and energy to the defense just kind of lights everyone else up, too.

Q. Can you hear him during a game?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I definitely hear him communicating on the back end a few times, but the only time I really hear him most of the time is I'm running to the ball, I see him fly down, make a tackle and he gets up just talking a lot. That's another one of those intimidating factors on offenses sometimes.

Like you see it in small ways. When I'm out of my peripheral seeing my Seahawks just swarming and also talking and I'm looking at our opponent and they're walking back to the huddle with their head down, it's almost like that Mike Tyson interview where he talks about how he feels like he has his opponent beat already when his opponents are dropping their eyes.

Q. Who talks the most of any teammate you've had?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Here?

Q. Anywhere.

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Anywhere, I would say Dexter Lawrence. But I also played alongside of him, so it was a lot easier for me to hear him. But he had some interesting smack talk for sure because he would say some stuff where I would kind of question it. But it worked.

Q. How early was the see ball, get ball mentality adopted by the defense? It had to be like training camp. How early was that adopted?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I would say it started during OTAs, honestly. I think that was around the time we talked about running to the ball. We talked about how our identity on defense is just like a high motor type of defense, type of play style, and you could see it immediately like when a new guy come in, we would see on film how he kind of played at a different level than us, but then within a few days he fits in with the rest of the defense playing at that same level.

I think it's definitely unique and special here, the way we attack the ball and the way we run to the ball, and I think we adopted it pretty quickly.

Q. What or who is the dark side? What would you say?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: The dark side is our defense. I think D-Law said it good at one point where he wants to turn the offensive lights off. There's been times this year where we've shut offenses completely off, like no touchdowns, no points at all sometimes, and I think that's what it feels like when the dark side is playing against you. It's just hard to get the ball moving. It feels like cutting your lights off. Feels like you're playing against 12 people.

Q. Does being All-Pro mean anything to you?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: Yeah, it means a lot for sure. I feel like I had a great season last year. I feel like I've had great seasons throughout my career, honestly, and there's been times where I was snubbed from Pro Bowls and all pros and things like that, and I'm sure a lot of players in the league have felt that way, as well. I'm not the only one.

But at the same time, to get that recognition from your peers, it means a lot.

Q. When did you find out you were All-Pro?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I was enjoying my downtime over this bye week we had, and Coach Mike hit me up and said, congrats. I had to be like, what are you talking about. Then I found out. It meant a lot to get that recognition for sure.

Q. It wasn't like 6:00 a.m. on Saturday when it came out, was it?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: No, it was around 8:00 a.m. You know Coach Mike was already up thinking about football, so he was on it.

Q. You and Grey Zabel have been working together. You've been helping him out since OTAs, training camp, and he got some All-Pro votes. What's your relationship been like? How has that developed over the season?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: I think he's definitely going to be an All-Pro player at some point in his career, sooner than later, honestly, and a part of that reason why is because he has the ability and the knowledge, but also he's just a sponge. He wants to soak up as much knowledge as possible. He didn't come into this league as a first-rounder thinking he knows it all. He came in wanting to learn from guys like Charles and guys even on the other side of the ball.

Even now, week 19, he's still coming up to me after drives in practice and being like, hey, did you notice this, what do you think I can do on this, and how would you react if I set you like this and things like that. He's just one of those guys that's constantly trying to learn, and I think that's his edge.

Q. What role has Aden Durde played in you guys' success on defense?

LEONARD WILLIAMS: AD? I would say he's just one of the best coaches I've played for. It's just the way he motivates me, the way he allows me to play my style of football, makes me play comfortable.

After a while, he just breathes so much life into you that it just makes you feel confident as a player, makes you trust yourself, makes you trust your teammates, makes you trust your coaches. I think just that energy that he brings, his passion to the game, it's just big for all the guys on defense, and especially the D-line.

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