

Seattle Seahawks Media Conference

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Coach Mike Macdonald

Weekday Press Conference

MIKE MACDONALD: All sorts of new stuff. All right, great to see everybody. Had a great walk-through. Going to go try to have a heck of a Wednesday and go from there.

What we got?

Q. Mike, how is Sam doing and what's the plan this week? Is he going to have to be limited in terms of how much he throws?

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, Sam continues to get better. You know, he's not going to be a full go the whole week, but we have a plan; we're going to work through it; see how the day goes; then kind of take it day by day and take it to tomorrow.

But he won't be like throwing every ball every play for the whole week, no.

Q. What about Charles Cross? Expect him to practice today?

MIKE MACDONALD: Charles did walk. We're kind of working through with Charles right now. We'll see how it plays out the rest of the day.

Q. On the injury subject, how is Josh Jones doing?

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, I don't believe Josh is going to practice today, so...

Q. Activated George. Could George get realistic to play Sunday? Could he get ready that fast?

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, yeah, George is in great shape. Working his tail off. Excited to get him out there. Haven't seen him practice in a minute, so be fun.

Q. Are there certain games where there is a clear advantage that you try game plan to exploit and other ones where it's such a close match that you focus more on what you want to the versus what the



opponent presents?

MIKE MACDONALD: No, if you talk to me from Monday to Thursday, there is just a lot of problems you're trying to solve. That's every week. As you start to kind of feel like you have some things that you want to be able to do and you see the guys execute in practice, it starts to come into focus as the week starts to get towards the end.

Q. I think over the course of two games the point difference is like one point, yardage is like one yard between you and the Rams. What do you think is it about when you two match up, such tight games?

MIKE MACDONALD: They're a really good team. You know, they play hard. They play together. They got really talented players. Got a great scheme.

You know, it's just a great matchup. It's right where we should be at this point of the year. It's pretty cool.

Q. What really makes Puka Nacua stand out, just in general.

MIKE MACDONALD: You name it. Ball skills are tremendous, so a lot of those contested catches he's coming down with. Body control on the sideline. Being able to make plays. He can kind of do everything so you can't count for him to do one thing. He's great in the run game. He is a? Great runner after catch. Yeah, I mean, he kind of gets hidden yardages, which is a testament to his toughness. So he does a lot of great things. Really good player.

Q. Now that you've gotten exposure to the offensive side of playcalling, what are some of the differences between offensive playcalling and defensive playcalling?

MIKE MACDONALD: Well, defensively you're just inherently reactionary. It's hard to dictate terms defensively because they are allowed to do whatever they want and line up however they want. I think that's probably the most fundamental difference.

At some point though like kind of the tables do turn based off something that maybe the offense would expect and you're in something different or a different presentation or



personnel group.

That's where it starts, is they're dictating terms initially.

Q. You guys had a positive turnover differential against every other team in the league this season combined. What was the difference in those two games against the Rams, and how do you change that this time around?

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, it's interesting. I think you're looking at a really small sample, and it's kind of like two independent like observations that happened to not go our way takeaway-wise.

So you look offensively, like, hey, there are some things we could do better to protect the ball. Special teams-wise, I thought we've been pretty sound with the football; been secure. Defensively I think there are some things we did in the first game that was really good and took the ball away and some ops this past game.

It's like are we doing the things we need to do defensively to put out ball in jeopardy and be able to attack it? It's kind of like a play-by-play, game-by-game type of thing. They do a good job protecting it.

See that really doesn't really have an affect on how we prepare, what we're trying to do in terms of making the ball come to life.

Q. When you look at the two games, what have you thought of how the rushing coverage has worked together to try to affect Matthew?

MIKE MACDONALD: I felt like we have been on pointe sometimes and not so much the -- especially the second game. Look, you got to tip your cap to them. They played a great game. Stafford played a tremendous game. Puka had a great game the second game.

You know, they did what they did to put up all the yards and points that they did. We got to figure out way to stop them this time. As a team I'm proud of the way we figured out a way to win the game given what happened on defense.

Q. Mike, with that second game that's the only team that's been able to do that against you guys any time recently. What stood out when you went back and looked at it about what went wrong that game and how you're looking to flip it this time?

MIKE MACDONALD: First you got to give them credit. They had great game plan and made a lot of great plays.

So they had guys open; when they didn't, they still made some plays. I think the explosives really inflate the stats a lot. Really that's -- the only way you get to a number like that is by some really explosive plays, and those are good plays by them, plays that we have to execute better.

But when I'm thinking of that game I'm thinking of, hey, got punched in the mouth early and then our guys regrouped and were kind of put ourselves back in a position to go win the game defensively.

So there is positives and things you want to grow from that game for sure.

Q. After that game, and I think after the Bucs game earlier, you said kind of similar things about how you maybe gave them too much game plan-wise. The second game was on a short week. Do you have a better feel for the right amount of what they can handle and everything?

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, I mean, you're always going to go into the game hoping this is the right -- you're at that sweet spot. Any time the result doesn't go your way, I got a big hand in how we play, too, so you got to look inward.

Okay, what were some of the inputs throughout the week that maybe I could've helped the guys out better and even in the game about some of the play calls we made.

There is several in that game where you want back. It stings that that's the case, but that's the case. You got to confront it and say, okay, what are the things we can do throughout the week to put ourselves in a better situation where we can help our guys out more?

That's the mentality. Same thing after Tampa Bay. You can feel it in real time. Like when your guys are in a certain position and it's not advantageous for them, turns out that's on the design of the play and what you're asking them to do. You can feel that in real time for sure.

Q. You haven't had a chance yet to get Matthew Stafford on the ground. No sacks. How much of that do you see as the rush and how was it doing versus coverage? I know they work together.

MIKE MACDONALD: They do a really good job getting the ball out on time, playing decisively. We have to disrupt timing. That's really the fact of the matter. We've gotten to him a few times where he got rid of it and thrown the ball away, made smart decisions where he hasn't put the ball in danger.

There are some good plays we're putting on tape to be able to affect him. Not as much as we want or as frequently as we want. But I think you're talking about that's a product of like how you're playing early down football, and third -- situational football to put you in those moments where maybe you can dial something up.

Q. When it comes to preparation, now that you've got a two-game sample size of the Rams in the playoffs and your team in a playoff game, does that change anything about how you prepare or evaluate or look at what's out there?

MIKE MACDONALD: Well, you're always going to use what information is out there, so since we have the extra game that we can watch, which is great, but that really doesn't affect our process at all. We're just -- you know, actually, like didn't do any work on either of those teams on Sunday, because if I did that and just wasted a whole day in the round before.

It's like look, let's take it like a normal week. Sunday happened. Let's go to work on Monday and do our normal Monday. Yesterday was a normal Tuesday. Let's do what we do on Wednesday today.

Yeah, it's week 20 now which is kind of cool. Guys were fired up to hear that in the team meeting today.

Q. On that note, you've spoken lost about maintaining that routine and the mindset in the process. When you walk in and there is a different backdrop and some other different new things, do you allow yourself to feel the magnitude of it or is that for some time down the road?

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, I think it's going to be natural to like kind of -- your mind is going to go there and it's going to happen to all of us. It's not like, hey, we're just going to ignore it. Just come back to center, because that's just kind of what we're -- it's just not important.

What's more important is what we do on the things every day that's within our control. It doesn't mean you like can't enjoy the process and appreciate where you're at and have gratitude for what our team has been able to accomplish to this point, but that's really what I'm asking of the guys. It's a reminder to me giving you this answer, hey, when it happens, okay, great. Come back, and how great can we be at refocusing throughout the week.

Q. You have been in a conference title game before in Baltimore. What did you take away from that experience? Anything you learned from that to kind of...

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, look, a lot of our philosophy is coming from, you know, our experiences, right? That's how you generate these thoughts on things, and so that has helped shape why we do what we do and treat it like another week. There are some things we took from that game that you kind of said, okay, if we're going to get there again, we would handle it a little bit differently.

From my perspective, not from like how John built the week or anything like that. It's just how you want to get your team ready to go.

Q. We've been hearing from players, from you all year about how close this team is. That week 11 loss, Sam has a tough outing. We hear what we heard from EJ and all the defense picking him up. Wondering how clear of an example that is? You haven't lost since then and maybe how the team rallied around that.

MIKE MACDONALD: It's funny. I think if you took a straw poll from the guys around the team I think that game was a game where it really came into focus about what type of team we could be. We have a special group that was resilient as heck and had each other's backs and were going to stick up for each other and fight like heck for 60 Minutes and really becoming the team we wanted to be.

We started to have some real evidence of it, even though it wasn't really the outcome we wanted. So kind of glad that it happened. Kind of like it stung in the moment, but given where we are at now, that was an important part of our season that I felt like something maybe we had to go through to get to the point we are now.

Q. The team released video today of you during the first team meeting talking about a vision of NFC Championship. When did that become a vision?

MIKE MACDONALD: That's funny. When Dave showed me that all I was thinking about was how nervous I was going to the first team meeting. I don't know if you can tell. It was a good editing job by our people. Probably some more awkward pauses throughout that. (Smiling.)

It's funny. It's actually a point of like an inside joke with the guys about like we didn't know each other and it was just our first like true interaction. Just kind of this wild experience. Everyone talks about what your first message to the team is going to be and it's really overblown frankly.

But you think about, hey, look, what am I going to talk to the team about? What's the first thing? I don't want to say the wrong thing. It just came to me. I think God just allowed me to just like kind of just take pressure away and

said, this is what you should say.

It was pretty powerful, awesome.

Q. You check the weather for Sunday?

MIKE MACDONALD: I actually did, yeah. I think it's going to be in the 40s unfortunately.

Q. Going back to you said you guys kind of rallied around the loss of week 11 and decided what team you wanted to be, what was different about that game I guess than losing to the Niners which was close and losing to the Bucs which was close?

MIKE MACDONALD: Good question. I don't think it's like, hey, now we realized it. I think that's -- or we realized what we wanted to be. I think that was clear from the getgo what we were chasing.

Just to be that probably deep into the season and to feel like, hey, you know, this outcome could have gone the other way given all the things that didn't go our way in the game against a really good team.

I think it puts some urgency behind playing a little bit cleaner football and understanding like, hey, look, we can expect to figure out ways to win these games and we're good enough to be able to do that.

Q. The Rams were really good against the blitz all year and then they struggled against it in the playoffs. When you faced a team that's got disparate results in those situations, how do you weigh what to pay more attention to?

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, I think the blitz thing is an interesting question. It's like what's the context? And so that's how with you look through it. There are sometimes where it's important to send people; sometimes it's important where it's not. We try not to put too much stock into one game, especially against a team that you're really familiar with.

So really doesn't affect like how we're going to think about how we want to game plan the game.

Q. You were asked, might have been on the radio a few weeks ago, about John winning executive of the year. You said it's only a matter by how much. Just looking at the job he's done building this roster really before you got here to now, or last three, four years, trades, free agency, draft, what stands out about the job he's done?

MIKE MACDONALD: Well, when Salk asked me why, it took me a minute to come up with the answer. It really is like conviction of what we're trying to build, what we want the Seahawks to be all about.

He's led the charge. It's really that simple. Then I think just like his leadership example on a day-to-day basis shows up in so many ways. The spirit of the building, his interaction with everyone. He talks to me people in the building than I do.

He's doing his thing all the time. He's been incredibly helpful to me. I was talking to somebody today actually about, hey, look, I didn't know anything coming in. You're just trying to do the best job you possibly can every day, and he knew when to kind of give you some air to breathe and grow and expand and learn and maybe fall a little bit, and also was there to support you when you needed it.

So he's just got a great feel for how to handle those situations, whether it's me or anybody else in the building.

Q. Mike, in week 20, when you're game planning, how much do you have to focus on the why or is it more about the execution now?

MIKE MACDONALD: Focus on the?

Q. On the why of each play. You talked about how important that is.

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, well, it's the same. Hey, look, this is what we're going to call. This is why. All right, let's go do to see what it looks like and then go from there. If it looks great, let's keep hammering it out. If it doesn't, let's make see how we can make it clear or move on.

Same cadence.

Q. On the blitz rate numbers statistically you guys have one of the lowest in the NFL this year. Did you anticipate that going into the year? Does that change kind of how you...

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, it does change, but frankly, I anticipated us pressuring more. But you just got to listen to your team, and I feel like we've done a good job of that.

Q. (Indiscernible) ...when a majority of the team showed up for what was voluntary workouts, you mentioned that a lot (indiscernible.) Now that you're this far into the season, what did that do for you guys during the season?

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, great. We would not be here



if the guys didn't buy-in the way they did and work the way they did in the offseason.

And it's easier said than done. You can ask until your blue in the face for them to come to our offseason program. If you haven't built something out the way that like Ivan and Danny and the rest of the guys built out, and our coaches create an environment where they feel like they can come in and get great work in and spend time with their teammates and actually improve as a player, if you're not doing those things to back it up, guys aren't going to want to come.

Really it's the players taking a leap of faith, trusting us and trusting what we've been able to bring to the table for us, and our coaches and staff creating an awesome environment where they feel like they can get better.

So if we didn't do it we would not be here right now. I'm convinced of that.

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