

# Seattle Seahawks Media Conference

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Seattle, Washington, USA

## Sam Darnold

### Weekday Press Conference

SAM DARNOLD: All right. Yeah, obviously third time playing these guys. Really good team. Really good defense. Really good scheme. Good players.

So like always, man, we're really excited about this opportunity to play these guys. Yeah, just got to have a really good week of practice.

For me, I got to continue to attack all the things that I need to attack. You know, just get ready like I said to play these guys, but also just getting my body right.

Getting my body right to be ready for Sunday.

#### **Q. When you went back and studied Saturday's film what stood out about the offense?**

SAM DARNOLD: I think just staying on schedule. Staying positive on first and second down. Staying ahead of the chains. I think that's a huge point of emphasis for us, you know, every single week. For us to go out and do that last week, it was huge.

#### **Q. Stating the obvious, but what has it done for you guys offensively to have the run game the last four, five games?**

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, whenever you get the run game going the way it has been it's huge. You know, opens up the pass game and play-action off it, run keepers, all those things.

So, yeah, it's great when the run game gets going.

#### **Q. Sam, how did you feel a day after that game and how do you feel now?**

SAM DARNOLD: Felt good. Feeling really good. Just attacking rehab these last couple days. Obviously will be throughout the week.

Like I said, just got to continue to prepare and get my body



right for Sunday.

#### **Q. Mike was asked about the Rams earlier in the week. He said he wouldn't want it any other way playing these guys do you feel similar?**

SAM DARNOLD: Who said that? I'm sorry.

#### **Q. Mike Macdonald.**

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah.

#### **Q. Do you feel similarly, and is there anything unique about the Rams that separates them?**

SAM DARNOLD: Like I said, they're a really good team. Obviously it's the NFC Championship, so two best teams in the NFC going at it. It's a really good opportunity to just play good football, you know, have that kind of next-opponent, next-game mentality.

Obviously we know the stakes. You know, like I said last week, it's win-or-go-home at this point. We look at it as another game. We trust our process throughout the week and go about it that way.

#### **Q. Mike Macdonald said he exhaled a little bit after the sequence where you got sack and hit Cooper on the next play. Did you have any moments in the game where you felt like, yeah, I'm going to be okay?**

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, once I came out. To be honest, once I came out in warmups and felt good throwing the ball I was confident about going out there and letting it rip.

Whatever happens throughout the game, whether I take a hit or not, like it's -- whatever happens, happens. If something tragic happens and I go down and can't get up, then it is what it is.

Drew, Jalen, they're ready to go. Obviously hopefully that doesn't happen. Yeah, I'm ready to attack everything and be ready for anything.

#### **Q. Sam, what will you guys miss without having Zach available?**

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, obviously Zach has been a huge



part of our offense, just the way that he runs the football. Downhill runner. He's been really good for us this year.

We're going miss him, but we got a lot of guys that can step up with him out.

**Q. ...a little bit with Velus at USC, right?**

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, yeah.

**Q. What do you remember about him when you were there?**

SAM DARNOLD: First of all, great dude. Then he's just a really good runner. Explosive. Can make guys miss.

**Q. At this stage of year is it important that you get the majority of the reps or 20 weeks in you kind of know what you're doing?**

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, I think it's always important to get reps throughout practice, walk-throughs. So reps are always vital throughout the week.

**Q. You mentioned how important it is to stay on schedule. Earlier in the season you guys were toward the bottom of the NFL and second or third and long and converting. You've actually become one of the best teams at that recently. Is that something you've been working on to be able to get back on schedule?**

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, I think for us it's just everyone doing their job, right? Doesn't necessarily -- you don't work on that more than you would on other weeks. I think it's just everyone executing and doing their job.

But I think just everyone kind of locking into their job and responsibilities as the season has progressed, we've just gotten better at that.

**Q. Mike was talking about the week 11 loss down in LA, the feeling of the team coming out of game, like how you guys felt despite the loss.**

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah.

**Q. What do you remember about the vibe coming out of that game?**

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, obviously wasn't my best performance, you know, with still a chance to win at the end.

For me personally, comes down to protecting the football, being smart, and getting the ball out of my hands at the

same time, you know.

**Q. With that, we hear all the time about how close this team is. What Ernest said after that game, how much was that an example?**

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, I think that's how we feel about everybody. Obviously he said that about me and it was great. It's great to hear that, especially coming from EJ, one of the leaders on this team.

But everyone feels that same way. Everyone has each other's back in that locker room and that's one of the best parts about this team.

**Q. On the topic of protecting the ball Mike has told us his coaching style to you and everyone else is not just simply don't mess up.**

SAM DARNOLD: Right.

**Q. Does that matter to you, that the messaging is that way, not just don't mess up?**

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, I think I've been saying it all year. I'm going to turn it loose. I'm going to -- if it's there and we get the coverage for the right play and I feel like it's there, I'm going to let it rip.

Yeah, just being smart with the football is always at a premium. Like I got to take care of the football at the end of the day. You know, that's where my mind is at. If we get the right coverage and the right play and I feel like a guy is open, I'm going to let it rip.

**Q. Is that something you're maybe better equipped -- probably not the right word -- in the year you are in now versus earlier?**

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, I think experience always plays a part in it. Kind of leave it at that. I think the more you experience the game, the way games go, you know, it's just we've kind of seen throughout the playoffs too like teams that take care of the football are usually the ones that end up in the win column at the end of the day.

**Q. From your perspective, what do the Rams do so well defensively that led to some of those takeaways?**

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, they do a lot of really good things defensively. Just their scheme is really good. Coach Shula, those guys do a good job coaching those guys up on what to do. Like I said, the players make it come to life with certain disguises and pressures.

They're a really good team, really good defense, and play really hard.

**Q. Coach often talks about how this team is able to focus in on just having the best Wednesday, Thursday, and block out all the external stuff. I am sure that's a lot easier said than done. What does it say about this team you've been able to do that to this point?**

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, I think it's -- a lot has to do with routine in my opinion. Like if I just -- I feel like everyone does such a good job of keeping their routine the same throughout the day, and when you do that, it's easier to go about it like oh, let's just go 1-0 this week. This is just another week.

If you change your routine -- one of the things, too, is having a couple press conferences during this week. So trying not to change my routine too much based on those kind of things.

But it's just keeping everything the same, watch the same amount of tape I do on a normal week, and go about it that way.

**Q. ...for a lot of different coaches at this point. Now you've had most of a full season with Mike Macdonald. How would you describe him differently than other coaches?**

SAM DARNOLD: I don't know if I could say what he does different. I just know that things that he does really well. He's very honest. He's very honest with the players. He listen to players.

If we're feeling a certain type of way about whatever it is, he's going to listen to us. At the same time he knows what's best for the team, and if guys are saying one thing and he feels like we need something, then Coach is going to put his foot down and be like, no, this is what I feel like the team needs.

He's really good at balancing that as a head coach, which I feel like can be hard. He does such a good job of just running the show and leading us.

**Q. Jaxon was just named offensive player the year by the Pro Football Writers Association. What can you say about what he's meant to the offense this year?**

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, I mean, he's deserved it. He deserves it. Just the way that he is day in and day out, his consistency is what everyone appreciates about him. Certain games where he might not get the touches, might not get the yards or a touchdown, and he's going to have

the same attitude every single day.

I think that's what people appreciate about him around here.

**Q. Grey Zabel was talking about how he and Jalen are to the point you don't have to talk during the game. They can get the call and look at each other. Certainly that affects their effectiveness. In what way does that affect you?**

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, I think just everyone being on the same page like you said without having to communicate all the time, that's huge. It allows us to operate faster, which, again, helps us stay on schedule on first and second down. It's all tied together.

So we just got to continue to do a good job of that. Staying on the details throughout the week. I think that's a big part of it, is understanding what kind of defense we're playing and what different type of looks we can get, and everyone communicating and being on the same page.

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