

# Seattle Seahawks Media Conference

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Seattle, Washington, USA

## Coach Mike Macdonald

Weekday Press Conference



MIKE MACDONALD: Great to see everybody. What do we got?

**Q. Last year at this time we were in Mobile, Alabama, with John Schneider and talking to the front office about what (indiscernible) roster. What do you remember about that?**

MIKE MACDONALD: It's funny how it aligns to where we are now. I just remember we were determined to take our team to another level. It's not just me and John sitting in a room punching buttons. It takes a lot of people being aligned and a lot of conversations. We had the right people for the job.

It's fun to be down there. You don't want to be down there too long, but I just remember having great conversation with the guys, seeing a lot of great players, Senior Bowl is an awesome event. That's about it.

**Q. Having this extra week with much more time to have a game plan installed next week, how would you evaluate what the team was able to accomplish in the last few weeks?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Well, I think you're looking at it, hey, big picture what we're trying to achieve over the next two weeks, and then hey, let's drill down day by day of what we're trying to accomplish on a kind of now-by-now type of basis. Today is a Thursday for us, so we're going to go have a heck of a Thursday practice. We just had a great walk-through. That's what our focus is.

Then when that's done, we'll shift our focus to the next thing. It's all in the spirit of how we want to handle the two weeks.

**Q. Are you doing 3rd down, red zone this week --**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, I think it is tough to, hey, stamp a game plan by the end of the week and say, this is what we're doing, we're not budging. I think it's a little

more fluid on how we're going to game plan.

But all of the areas will be addressed this week and then we'll go back through it again next week.

**Q. Will next week be kind of a normal week, as well?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Next week will be -- once Wednesday hits, it'll be the same cadence. Just there's some extra stuff, too. I think there's some extra media obligations and that sort of thing, travel time. There's some variables that we normally don't deal with here. We'll take those in stride and keep rocking and rolling.

**Q. There are no top-15 edge rushers in terms of sacks on either team. What's the benefit of the interior strength and rush versus edge rush?**

MIKE MACDONALD: We can talk about it at length if you wanted to. I think the common thread between both of our teams is there's kind of a synergistic effect to how we rush the passer, and they do the same thing. That's something that I know our guys take a lot of pride in on how we play, and it takes the whole front. It takes really all 11 guys to plan in concert to create pressure on a quarterback and get sacks.

I don't know, I think it might just -- the whole who has sacks, who doesn't, I'm not sure what that really is a function of.

**Q. You've talked all year about the unselfish pass rush, the way you guys play. Is that kind of fitting for your defense that you don't have the 15-sack one guy really standing out there?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Well, I think their attitude and their approach every day is a little bit of a microcosm of how our whole team operates. We've talked about this before, but that is a group that one, has a lot of great players and a lot of leaders on our team so they are going to be voices throughout the rest of the team, and they are going to be setting the example for a lot of the rest of the guys on the team, and if they operate like that and they put the actions behind how we say we want to operate, that's powerful for the rest of the team.

I think that's been a critical part of our team's success this



year has been how our D-line operates.

**Q. With Brady Russell, special teams captain for this game, what has he meant to the special teams this year?**

MIKE MACDONALD: He's doing well. Just going through the process right now. But man, really all of our guys that have played on special teams have been great.

But to Brady, I think, from day one, how much pride he took in his role, again, setting an example for how we want to operate here with our special teams units. Guys follow his lead. His energy every day is contagious. Love for his teammates, love for the game, unselfish. He's tough as nails. You could argue he's probably one of the best core four combo guys in the league. He's been doing it for a couple years.

**Q. Are the other two captains fairly obvious for you?**

MIKE MACDONALD: They are. We might actually add one or two over the next week or so. But yeah, those guys have been great. I think no explanation needed.

**Q. What do you appreciate about the way guys gravitate to Jax and Spoon because they are themselves -- Spoon is a louder guy --**

MIKE MACDONALD: If I'm a player in the locker room, I just want guys to be -- I just want to be guys themselves. That sets the environment for the rest of our team. Really our coaches, too, where you don't have to walk around acting like, how am I supposed to act; am I supposed to be like this or am I supposed to be like that? No, the principle of the matter, the thing that we really care about is the decisions that we're making and are we putting the team first and are we abiding by our team principles, and all the rest of the stuff really tends to come more to life because they take the pressure off guys.

But again, those are two leaders on our team, more of our high-profile players, and that act that way, it's easy to fall in line.

**Q. Early in the week you mentioned the possibility of connecting with John Harbaugh just about Super Bowl and all that's involved. Have you been able to connect with him?**

MIKE MACDONALD: I've talked to some other coaches to this point, but Harbs is pretty busy right now, so this weekend we might be able to connect.

**Q. Sam Donald, have you been able to drill down on**

**what his practice plans are, or is that still kind of a fluid situation?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Well, it's just day by day, how we're going to operate. That's what we've done the last two weeks. So that's what we'll keep on doing.

You put timetables on things. He's going to play in the game. It's just how to handle -- what's the best thing to do every day with that in mind. That's how we're going to treat it.

**Q. You mentioned after the game how Sam maybe shut a lot of people out. He seems like probably the last person who really cared about those outside perceptions. What do you think about his approach, his personality, that that stuff doesn't really get to him?**

MIKE MACDONALD: I think it's one of those things where it's like, hey, when we're -- the good and whatever the bad is, but when the opinions are changing back and forth, he's been the steadfast force throughout the whole thing. That's who he is. That's who he is, and one of the reasons why I think he carries so much respect within our building and with our team.

Let us go defend him, but he'll keep being himself.

**Q. What is it about Klint's approach to the offensive play calling that you think separates him from other offensive coaches?**

MIKE MACDONALD: I think the thing I appreciate the most about Klint is he's a team player. It's all about what's best for the team all the time, and he takes a lot of pride in that, that it's a team effort. He'd be the first to say that the rest of his staff does a great job and the players are the ones that make it come to life. So I think there's a humility behind how he operates. Creates an environment where you're getting all those positive aspects for everybody involved.

**Q. You've got one of the youngest rosters in the NFL. You would expect the second half of the season you were going to see a lot of those young players elevate their game, but how much has Jalen Sundell been a catalyst for the run game getting going here the last month or so since he came back from his injury? Seems like the light switch has really come on for him.**

MIKE MACDONALD: Well, I think Jalen was playing good football before he went out, and he was playing good football last year. He had a heck of a training camp. He won our top hawk award in the off-season.



Look, you want to give him all the credit in the world for how he's playing. He's playing great football. But to say he's a catalyst for what we're doing, I think that might discount the effort involved with everybody else. As the center, you've got to make the right calls and you've got to be decisive and you've got to take the line and you've got to be on your stuff because that's where it starts. But just really pleased with where he is right now as a player, and he's got a great future.

**Q. You scored five touchdowns on special teams this year and had the muff turn into points immediately last week, too. What have you thought about your unit this year as a whole that Jay has run this year and how critical that unit has been to helping you get to this point?**

MIKE MACDONALD: We love our unit. We love our special teams unit. Jay deserves a ton of credit. He's a phenomenal coach. I think Fitz also deserves a ton of credit, and he kind of flies under the radar on a lot of things that he's bringing to the table.

I think, again, it's how you want our team to operate. It's just daily chasing edges mentality of how do we kind of make -- what's one more thing can we -- can we capture that today to take us to -- what's those markers every day that we can hit. They do that. They practice their tails off every day. They've got great energy. We practice special teams first, and one of the things we talk about all the time is that they really set the tempo and the standard of how well that practice is going to go on how they play and how they practice.

They continue to hold the standard up every time they take the field, which has been great.

**Q. Week 11 you guys had the four-turnover game against the Rams. At that point you were negative 7 in turnover margin. Since then you're plus 8 and haven't turned the ball over in three games. What do you think really changed?**

MIKE MACDONALD: I think you're just saying -- look, anytime there's growth, it's not like you just -- sometimes it's, hey, there's something we've got to fix, and now we kind of take a different course of action and things change maybe a little bit more drastically. But I'm more the believer of, like, hey, I think we were about the right stuff at the beginning. I think we talked about it. I think we drilled it. I think we were training it all the time. But I think the difference was we've stuck with it.

That's when you start to see returns. Not to panic and say,

well, now we've got to play differently or we've got to change our language about how we're going to play the game or our style. None of that really happened. It was more just doubling down on the things we really believed in and do that every day.

**Q. What was the award you mentioned that he won?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Called top hawk award. A little Danny Van Dyke special. It's awesome. Basically we made everything in the off-season like a competition. I can't tell you exactly how he did it, but it was really well thought out. The guys loved it. You've got coaches competing, and Jalen just brought it every day. It was a combination of hitting your personal milestones -- you get your picture on the wall. But the guys loved it.

That's actually -- the group, it was individual award and a group award. If your group won, you were out of the conditioning test. All I remember is Spoon's team won because he was like super excited they won. But if you won the award it means you were there and you were getting after it and doing everything we asked, so you're going to be in shape, so it was kind of a no-brainer.

**Q. How many people got to not do the conditioning test because of that?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Seven or eight.

**Q. With Klint, when we talk to him, he seems very low key and soft spoken. Are there things about his personality behind the scenes that we don't see or is that who he is --**

MIKE MACDONALD: That's who he is, man. That's what makes him Klint. There's no, I'm going to act this way to somebody and act another way to somebody else. This is who he is.

**Q. I imagine there's plenty of fire there that we don't see?**

MIKE MACDONALD: I mean, he's not coaching you guys. He's just answering your questions.

**Q. What's the most fiery that you've ever seen Klint?**

MIKE MACDONALD: When we score a touchdown. If he's covering his mouth after a touchdown, he's probably saying some things he doesn't want you to know.

**Q. The intention for your program early on, when did you begin to see that early on, back in April?**



MIKE MACDONALD: I just think early on, that's how we decided we wanted to operate, and to me, if you want to get anything done, you've got to know where you're going. You can't just walk out there and just throw the football out there and say let's go practice. What is our intention today; it's keep it simple, let's do it together. We hit a lot of marks throughout this whole process. I'm not going to lie, we didn't hit it as consistently as I wanted or as you would hope we would probably until this off-season. I just felt like the guys were locked in every day, and it was awesome.

**Q. What do Christian Gonzalez and Carlton Davis provide them on the corners?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, they're really good players. Really good players. Both have size, speed, can play man-to-man, can play zone, can track the ball in the deep area of the field. Good players.

**Q. With as much film as is available on the Patriots, how far back do you guys go?**

MIKE MACDONALD: I think it just depends on the situation. For some situations that don't have as many observations you might need to dig a little deeper. But that's how we always operate. You can go back years if you want, coordinator history, all those things are in play. You're really making that decision every week on how far back you want to go.

It's not as different as you might imagine, honestly.

**Q. Is there any caution against diving into too much stuff?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, absolutely. Again, that's the same -- kind of like after a bye week. How are you going to allocate your time? Is it, hey, we're trying to get better at our fundamentals? That takes a lot of investment. Hey, we're trying to work some situation stuff. There's all sorts of different ways you can kind of allocate your time and invest to try to get your team ready. So those types of decisions are pretty consistent.

**Q. What's it like to work with Jody Allen day-to-day, and how does she lead?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Well, I forgot the last time I talked about it, but it was recently. It was in the last week. The thing that sticks out to me about Jody was her enthusiasm about where she wanted our team to be and our franchise to be as the vision of the Seattle Seahawks, and that was during our interview process.

Honestly, that's really where it was like, okay, this is

something I feel really strongly about that I think that I could help create that. So everything, I think, has been through that lens, and it's very clear of what type of team she wants. She's been incredibly supportive.

We haven't hit the mark all the time, and so when she gives feedback, it's very simple. And it's through, like, a great lens that maybe if I'm kind of in the fog, you don't see it. She's been awesome. She's been awesome. We meet weekly, and she's been great. She's been great.

**Q. People say she asks great questions.**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, that's kind of what I'm getting at. I'd say like a piercing question. It gets right to the point, and it's helpful. If we look at it through that lens of, hey, we're going in the same direction here, it's been really great.

**Q. Do you meet with her every week?**

MIKE MACDONALD: It's on Zoom.

**Q. Is it midweek, right after a game?**

MIKE MACDONALD: It's a day after the game.

**Q. One of the things that John said yesterday was he noticed back in the summer, especially the newcomers, a guy like Sam, immediately was close and connected. When you first saw that, too, did that kind of give you the indication like okay, these new guys are here and it's already like they've been here a while? Did that give you any indication of what might be coming?**

MIKE MACDONALD: It's tricky because it's our second year, so it's not like, hey, we've been doing this for a ton of time. Hey, newcomer comes in, what do we do. It's like, the way I saw it was, hey, we showed up -- talk about intention. We had the intention, and I felt alignment through our team, throughout the off-season program. You're going to have a new team every year, so you're trying to feel out kind of where are we going, what's the direction here, what are the daily inputs that we're doing, and it just -- you go back and look at it now, we just kept hitting the mark, and the guys deserve a lot of credit. It's not easy to do that every day, and Sam led the charge.

We talked about this last year, but our off-season offensive attendance was tremendous. Felt like we had the whole team here every day.

**Q. What's the balance between staying disciplined and rushing --**



MIKE MACDONALD: You're talking about Drake?

**Q. Yeah, staying disciplined in rushing lanes but also being aggressive trying to get --**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, it's a great point. I think there's times for both. We're going through that process right now of how we want to play. I think the key is trying to create as many of those situations as possible. But he is a tremendous player. He really is. He's strong. He's fast. You know all the things, great arm talent, great decision making. We've got to be on our stuff up front.

**Q. With Drake popping off of the injury report, how much do you take that into account?**

MIKE MACDONALD: None.

**Q. What's it like to have a guy like Jalen Milroe on scout team replicating that ability?**

MIKE MACDONALD: I mean, it's great to have Jalen repping for us. Drew does a phenomenal job. I think you know when you've nailed it with a rush or when you didn't. Either through execution or how it feels throughout the play. Maybe you do want them to throw it on time because you're trying to get -- there's kind of reasons for how you're going to play each play. You don't want to slow him down, either. You want him to go play quarterback so you can get a great look.

**Q. With Josh having been there for so long in New England, is it still setting the same fundamental offense or has it really evolved with what Drake can do with his legs?**

MIKE MACDONALD: It's rooted in their system, without having been there the whole time, but having gone against the Patriots for a number of years, the core principles seem like they're there, and then, look, you've got to give them a lot of credit. It's an incredibly efficient offense. They've been explosive. There's definitely some things that they're probably doing that's exclusive to Drake, as they should.

But that's what you'd expect from a great offense is to have a great foundation and be able to build around your players.

**Q. Is Velus Jones okay?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, he's a little sore, so we'll manage him over the course of this week and the rest of the week.

**Q. What are you looking forward to most personally?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Honestly, I haven't even thought about it.

**Q. Within your team --**

MIKE MACDONALD: I can't give you anything. I do love being with our team. But I think, again, why go in with expectations. Just kind of go experience it.

**Q. You seem to be always self-assessing your play calling. When you look at how you guys got here, what do you think about how you've called the defense?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Good enough to get us here. We're going to do something tomorrow that's going to be funny in the defensive room that will highlight some of our poor decisions. But I do think the players feel when you're in it with them. So when you can identify that, hey, I fell short here, that helps them own their mistakes, as well.

Again, if you're full of crap and you're blaming the players on every play, they're going to know. We don't want to live like that. But we're here, so that's a positive.

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