



Minnesota Vikings Media Conference

Sunday, December 29, 2024

Sam Darnold

Postgame Press Conference

Vikings - 27, Packers - 25

SAM DARNOLD: Obviously another great team win tonight. I thought our defense started out really, really fast. I thought we could have been a lot better early on, but we kind of got going there during the middle when we kind of double dipped there at the end of the second quarter. Then to start the third quarter, I thought that was really good for us to get that field goal and then get the touchdown coming out.

Yeah, I felt like we executed at a high level. Obviously a lot of things to correct, but overall, man, it was a great team effort. I thought defense played really well, like I said. Special teams did their thing per usual. Just a really great team effort, obviously, against a really good Packers team.

Q. Kevin and your teammates talked about the reception you got when you came back to the locker room. Can you describe it from your point of view?

A. Yeah, a lot of water bottles, a lot of water. I think I blacked out when Aaron Jones grabbed me and lifted me up. I didn't know what to do with my hands in that situation, Ricky Bobby style. It was an interesting moment, but a fun moment, man, to be embraced by your teammates like that.

Yeah, it's always fun to be able to have that moment with my teammates.

Q. A lot of success attacking the middle of the field. You also had a lot of success going to people other than Justin early. Those things kind of dovetailed early. Was that all part of a game plan or just the way it worked out?

A. No, it was just the way it worked out. Obviously we kind of understand just what teams want to do with 18 in terms of coverages or playing man coverage. Yeah, I think just -- I think the biggest thing for me is just continuing to go through my reads. That's the biggest thing, go through my reads, listen to my feet, and just continue to go through my progressions and be very diligent about that.

Q. Three passes Kevin called on the last drive trying to run out the clock. Is that what you expect from him?

A. Yeah, absolutely. When guys are packing the box trying to stop the run, I know that KO is going to be aggressive, if that's the case. Obviously there's been times throughout the course of the season where we have tried to run it. So it's not always going to be that way. But whenever he does call a pass in that situation, I'm always prepared for it, and I feel like our guys did a really good job of executing that.

Q. You were talking to Tom Brady. Was that why you were --

A. Taking so long?



Q. Yes.

A. Yeah.

Q. Was he asking a lot of questions?

A. It's okay to say it. I know I was taking forever, just like I did after the game every time.

Q. I don't want to use Tom Brady as an excuse.

A. No, it was great to be able to obviously talk to the best to ever do it. It's always special whenever you get to have him call your game and talk to guys like Tom after the game. I don't take stuff like that for granted ever. It's a special moment to be able to share with those people.

Like I said, just all around, just our team -- my teammates, every single person in this organization, I'm just happy to be here.

Q. Where does that moment rank for you like in your football career in terms of just within the locker room type of situation?

A. Oh, yeah, that was pretty special. I can't tell you exactly where it ranks right now, but it was a special moment for sure.

Q. How long did it feel like the ball was in the air on the way to Akers?

A. Yeah, that was incredible. Incredible catch, incredible execution by all the guys on the field. It was not my best effort on that, but I'm just happy that Cam was able to come away with that and kind of seal the deal for us.

Q. You talk about your teammates. Obviously what just happened in the locker room, but even the guys on defense are saying Sam inspires me. Josh Metellus was just saying everything you have gone through in your career, I have gone through. It's kind of like a bonding thing. You're like a lightning rod for them on both sides of the ball. How does that make you feel?

A. I feel like it's reciprocal. All of us together, we kind of bounce energy off of each other. It's awesome, man, for us to not exactly play the way that we wanted to on offense early on and our defense be able to get some crucial stops against a really good offense in Green Bay, yeah, it's incredible.

It goes both ways. We all feed off each other's energy, and it's going to continue to be that way.

Q. I know that stats are not what you're after, but when you've had such a good season record-wise and you're able to hit that 4,000 passing yard mark, 35 passing touchdowns, what does that mean to you?

A. It means we're doing our job on offense. That's all that really means to me. Just going to continue to strive to improve every single day. I feel like that's what we've been doing. That's the reason I feel like we've been executing, and we're just going to continue to do that.

Q. On the touchdown to Jordan when he runs the hitch, like how special of a route is that?

A. Yeah, it's incredible. J runs routes like that all the time in practice and games. He just continues to surprise me with the way that he can get in and out of cuts and just his suddenness, his quick twitch. It's very impressive.

Q. How much do you guys let yourself go there with what next week could mean, a win next week?

A. For us, it's the same mindset. We've had this mindset the entire season. We talk about it all the time, but it's not only -- it's a way of life too. Every single day. Tomorrow we're going to watch the tape, continue to get better.



This game we play, obviously Thursday sometimes is a tough week, but whenever you play, Sunday or Monday, these weeks are the same. So you've got to be able to have fun with each other, but you get in a routine to where you're not caught up in the result of anything or what next game could mean. You start to get in that routine, and you just start to get laser focused on our next opponent come usually around Monday night, Tuesday.

Q. People have come up to you and said like 1-0. Has that happened actually?

A. Yeah, it's pretty incredible. People will -- just random people will come up to me, hey, we're 1-0 this week, man. Just keep going. I see you guys. I see you.

It's awesome, man, just the way the entire community has embraced this team and just our mindset with everything. It's pretty special.

Q. Just only the one sack for a five-yard loss tonight. What was working in terms of navigating the pocket, pass protection?

A. I thought our big guys did a really good job up front today. They do every single week. It's just a matter of whether I get the ball out or not. It was a really good day in terms of that.

I felt like there were times too where I could have got the ball out a little quicker, especially on the second to last drive. But I thought the big guys did a really good job tonight.

Q. On your pass to Jefferson on that last drive, how tough of a play is that?

A. Oh, the keeper? It's something that we work on all the time. It's something we've been working on since April. First of all, for him to be able to make that catch, I think he made it with one hand. I just try to put it in a really good spot for him, even though it was tight coverage, and I knew he would be able to come away with that football.

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