



Rams P Johnny Hekker– Media Availability – August 25, 2020

(On the kicking competition)

"Yeah, it's been great. The tough thing about not having any OTAs and kind of that of that aspect of the offseason in person, we haven't had a ton of opportunities to see these guys compete and kind of watch them work on their craft. But, as far as they've been working during this camp period they been all incredible. They all have great attitudes. They work well together and as well as being competitive, they root for one another and are real professionals about it. So, for being younger guys, you know, (K) Lirim (Hajrullahu) is definitely an older guy with more experience and (K) Austin (MacGinnis) has his XFL and AAF experience. But, they work really well together and it's been just a pleasure to work with them. Having (LS) Jake (McQuaide) snapping makes the whole thing easier, because the ball is on the money and I just have the job of putting it down."

(On having a voice to determine who's the starter)

"You know, I don't think so. I'm really just focusing on giving my best as far as holding for them. I'm going to have some input as far as, 'Okay, what do you see?' but, at the end of the day that is coach and management's decision and I'm going to give my input when asked, but nothing unsolicited."

(On how it's been different with Special Teams Coordinator John Bonamego)

"Yeah, I think just terminology is different. A lot of the stuff that they teach is universal across special teams, scheme-wise. And it's just getting to know 'Bono's' (Special Teams Coordinator John Bonamego) terminology for things and how he wants things done, and just being another voice of reason for those guys and helping encourage all the core special teamers to buy in to what he is saying and just getting extra film time in when we can. Really just try to congeal as a special team's unit. That's what makes special team units successful, is guys that genuinely care for one another and for the success of the team. So, being selfless— because a lot of these guys, that are coming in as young guys, have very limited special teams experience, didn't have any OTAs or offseason program to really build that continuity, so we're really putting ourselves at premium in this time of the season, just doing what we can while we're on the field and then trying to work in extra film time whenever we can."

(On how the transition has been as one of the older players)

"I think it's been somewhat easy for me. You know, 'Coach Bono' has done a great job of really just kind of letting me set my schedule, as far as when I'm coming to kick and when I'm going to be off. Really just checking and seeing how I'm feeling and what I am doing. For the most part, I'm my own biggest critic when I'm out there. So, if I'm not punting well, he's not going to have to say much because I'm already giving myself a tongue lashing and just being critical. So, for the most part it's just going out there and trying to just maintain and increase the standards that I have for myself and just being a guy that encourages my teammates. Because for the most part I'm not playing, you know, I'm watching a lot of practice these days. So, when I can be of an encouragement or help somebody out or do something that's going to help somebody else's practice be more successful, then I'll do that as well."

(On what it was like punting towards the Oculus in SoFi Stadium on Saturday)

"It was great. In my mind, I saw it begin a lot lower and then you get in the stadium and you see the full scale of everything, and it is just massive. You know, you saw the pictures and everything they had, all the photographs inside the stadium and then the bowl, and you're like, 'Okay, that thing looks pretty hitable'. And of course, the thing is never going to be an issue in the game because of how it wraps the entire

outside of the field, no one is going to hit a ball with a trajectory that is going to hit that thing, unless it's a very bad mistake. But, warming up it's going to be every punter's goal to sit under that thing and rip one up into it. I connected on one pretty good and it was still pretty short. So, I'm not sure. I just have to keep working, keep grinding, and I'm going to get one off the Oculus one of these days."

(On what it means to be one of very few guys who started in St. Louis and now playing in the opening at SoFi Stadium)

"It's pretty incredible. You know, I'm, of course, really thankful to the guys that have made my career a success to this point. I have a really easy job of catching a ball and kicking it. I have a lot of guys around me that have bought in to helping me be a success. So, they've helped me stay here for a long time. Of course, when the team first made the move, they sat us down gave us the conceptual drawings of the stadium, showed it to us. Me and some of the older guys left the meeting thinking, 'Oh man these rookies are going to love that thing' (laughs). To be still here with the team, you know, kind of be opening up the first game in there against the Cowboys is going to be an incredible feeling and man, I'm just really thankful to (Owner / Chairman) Stan (zur) and the management for keeping me on. And then also, for forking out the money to build that beauty."

(On any standout memories of the relocation to LA)

"I can't say there is a certain moment that just sticks out. I think being in that stadium was pretty cool. And then maybe the sendoff that we had to the Superbowl outside of the stadium, kind of seeing it as it was starting to really take shape. But I hadn't seen it between then and Saturday. So, that was pretty incredible, to get in there and actually see the seats in and all the suits. That thing has got so many suites. That's going to be pretty fun to see how people utilize that space. But yeah, I'm just really looking forward to that first game. I think that will be a great culmination."

(On K Lirim Hajrullahu being eccentric)

"I wouldn't say eccentric. All kickers have a little bit of something to them. They're all a little weird, all specialist are. I'm not excluded from that sentiment, but for the most part he is just really serious about his business. He's a guy that has had a lot of success in the CFL, and it's for a good reason. You know, he's really serious about his days when he's working and then when he's not he is taking care of his body to prepare for his next opportunity. So, he just has a great mindset and for the most part he is demanding of me as a holder, which is great. I'm not going to get better unless he is telling me what he needs and how I can get the laces in the right spot for him or a certain lean on different days with the wind out here. We're just really working to build that continuity between all three kickers and myself."

(On playing for the first time without Cowboys K Greg Zuerlein and playing without any fans)

"I think for the first part, missing (Cowboys K) Greg (Zuerlein), the weird part about this is I'm going to get to see him, he's just going to be on the other sideline. So, that's kind of a great way to open up the season and just a cool way to see an old friend. You know, I miss him, I still text with him. Him, Jake, and I are still in a group chat and still communicate pretty regularly. He's a great friend. He just had a baby, wish them nothing but the best, as a family as well. It'll be cool to see him, bittersweet. I'm definitely going to try and talk some trash, get into his head. I've also got some great bonds with these kickers that we have now and whoever we have come that Sunday, the 13th is going to be capable and in a great position to help us put points on the board and get that first win."

"As far as playing in an empty stadium, it'll be a little eerie. It was interesting having the scrimmage there then thinking, 'Man, this is kind of what game day is going to be like'. You're going to be able to hear the game collisions and communications so much more clearly on the field. It's going to just be a unique situation, hopefully something that we don't have to deal with too much longer, but it's in the best interest of our league and our fans. So, I think just whatever we can do just to support that decision, we can't change anything about it now, so we just have to embrace it as a team and come out there ready to go. Bring our own juice."