



Rams Head Coach Sean McVay – Media Availability – August 31, 2020

(On the report of WR Cooper Kupp's injury)

"That report is inaccurate. He does not have an ankle sprain. He had had some soreness in his lower leg that had been going on for the last couple of days. There was a specific play in which he communicated that he was feeling it, so we wanted to be cautious with him. An X-ray of his leg during the scrimmage, in which case, I communicated to you guys that there was nothing on that. We're monitoring him, because he has some soreness in that leg, but an ankle sprain did not take place. That's an inaccurate report. But, he had had some soreness, which was something that had been going on for the previous couple days. We are going to monitor him, but he's feeling good. There was no injury to report. It was more of just, 'Hey, the goal is to make sure he's as healthy as possible for the 13th. So, when I was communicating to you guys, the information I had gotten, is exactly what I communicated. The X-ray came up, there was nothing there. It was something that had been going on prior to it, and we were truly being extra cautious with (WR) Cooper (Kupp), but don't anticipate any set-backs, as far as for the Dallas prep, but with the goal of a player that's played as many snaps as him, to be as fresh and ready to go for the 13th. We might limit some of his work this week, but we're going to just take it day-to-day, but that's exactly what's going on with Cooper."

(On if WR Van Jefferson will move into Cooper's spot)

"Yeah, (WR) Van (Jefferson) would slide up into our three-receiver rotation. I think when you look at it, we've got some guys that have played a lot of football and (WR) Robert (Woods), Cooper and (WR) Josh (Reynolds), we feel really good about and I've been impressed with Van's ability to pick things up quickly. I think it is a reflection of (Wide Receivers) Coach (Eric) Yarber and (Assistant Wide Receivers Coach) Zac Robinson, but also the veteran presence in that room. Just like in the scrimmage the other day, when Cooper ended up leaving, you saw some of those increased opportunities for Van, but he's done a nice job and that would mean more work, but it doesn't necessarily reflect that he's stepping in for Cooper. We've got a lot of different personnel groupings and things like that, but it would mean some more 'ops' in some of our three-receiving groupings."

(On the week ahead and if the team is in training camp or game prep mode)

"That's a good question. It's a little bit of both, and really it's not even necessarily you're getting into your Dallas preparation, but what we are is we still want to compete, push one another, but maybe work on some different looks that we don't get from our offense or from our defense, because we have been going against similar schemes and there's some things that opponents will do. Not exclusive to the Cowboys, but even when you just look at some standard things around the league that maybe isn't a part of what our defensive structure has or what our offense activates, in terms of some of the concepts or run schemes. It will be a combination of both. I think really, our true Dallas prep will really start once you get through these next three days of practice and then once you end up making some of those (roster) cuts. We've got a couple of extra days where you want to be mindful but you don't want it to feel like you're preparing for the Cowboys forever, but I think you'll see that truly reflected on Saturday, Sunday and Monday, those kind of extra days that we'll have. To really answer your question, true camp, you can look at it as ending on Thursday."

(On an update on LB Travin Howard and if LB Micah Kiser will get a mic in his helmet)

"With the first question, 'T. Howard' (LB Travin Howard), we're monitoring that knee. We'll have some further updates with you, but in the instance if we're not able to have him, it does look like you'd feel really good about those three guys that have played some football. I mentioned (LB) Troy Reeder the other day, he's a guy that's played a lot of football. But, I was really encouraged with (LB) Kenny (Young). I thought he

played really well. I think (LB) Micah (Kiser) continues to demonstrate why we felt so good about him coming out of Virginia – great sense and instincts for the game, he's a great communicator. Made a couple plays like you guys mentioned, towards the latter half of the scrimmage, at that first half. As of right now, we're working through all those communication things, but if you did say, 'Alright, if T. Howard isn't available,' I feel really good about those three guys and then it will be interesting to see how these young guys continue to step up under (Assistant Head Coach/Linebackers) Coach (Joe) Barry's guidance."

(On the type of player a receiver needs to be to go over the middle)

"I think it's gutsiness. I think there's a trust element. Coach Yarber says, 'You can't live forever,' but we say that with a joke, but I think you're looking for toughness, that fearlessness, that no flinch mentality, but it's also a level of, 'All right, we want to make sure that as coaches, we're calling smart plays,' and then the quarterbacks making the decisions on, if you do have to throw those in-breaking routes, it's coming out in the rhythm and timing that you want so you're not letting safeties bare down on you. I think it's a collaboration of the toughness, but then also the play selection by us as coaches and then the decision making by the quarterback when to make those throws."

(On clarity on the kicking competition or needing more time to evaluate)

"I think that's where we're at. You want to use every bit of the time that we have to really evaluate this. It's certainly a very important decision for us and we have three guys that are very capable. The more opportunities that we can create to try to simulate those game experiences is what's important. We're going to take all of our time and I think all those guys have done a nice job, but it certainly is far from decided."

(On what he saw in OLB Leonard Floyd)

"I think the first thing, is just coaching against (OLB) Leonard (Floyd) – he's a guy that's always been disruptive and I think in a lot of instances the numbers aren't indicative of the kind of impact that you can have on the game, especially when you're talking about a versatile playmaker like him. He can go forward, he can present some different options as a guy that's played in coverage and then obviously I have a huge amount of trust and confidence in (Defensive Coordinator) Coach (Brandon) Staley and having coached him. Even just going back to that 2018 season when Brandon was really coaching him, I thought he played excellent football. He's a guy that can make a lot of plays, he can line up all over the place, he's kind of the 'joker' type of player on defense that you like to have between the half backs and tight ends on offense and he's a guy that showed up in a big way the other night. I think if that's a real scrimmage where you're playing tackle football, he's probably disrupting a handful of plays that we kind of just let go for the feel and the flow of the scrimmage, but I think he has been outstanding throughout camp. I love his demeanor every single day. He loves football. (Outside Linebackers Coach) Chris Shula loves working with him, he's done a great job and I think he sets the tone for that outside linebacker room. I don't think by any stretch, the production, when you just look at the numbers, is reflection of the caliber of player that we feel like we've got and what he'll be for us this year."

(On T Rob Havenstein and being off the injured list at the end of last season)

"That was so long ago. I would say this, he was working through some different things and he's so tough that he persevered through some stuff that was bothering him early on in the season. Here is what I feel great about – I know that he attacked the offseason the right way, he's feeling healthy, he looks like the guy that has been a top-tier, starting tackle in this league. He's got a great way about himself and I've been very pleased with (T) Rob (Havenstein). If you look at two of our bright spots this camp, if you said okay, looking at somebody coming off the edge on defense and looking at some consistency and stability on your edges offensively, I think Rob and Leonard Floyd have been a double thumbs up and very pleased and excited about what those guys are going to do for us this year and be big impact players."

(On his confidence in his offense)

"I think it's just about stacking blocks every day. Really, it's one of those deals where it's never as good as you think, it's never as bad as you think. I think there's a lot of stuff that we can still clean up, but I think the ability to get in and out of the huddle, being able to change up some of your paces within the framework of a drive, seeing the ball very limited touch the ground when you look at when you decide to throw, getting efficient runs off. I think being able to stay on track and string together solid drives that are indicative of what good offenses do and then obviously being able to finish. I thought there was a lot of good examples

of that but then there's a lot of example too where you're saying, 'All right, is there some areas where we can be better? Be sharper outfit, really from all 11,' and the answer is, 'Absolutely.' So, we've got to make sure we maximize these last couple of weeks, so that we're truly peaking on the 13th. I thought, really just overall, when you look at the previous week to the next week, especially when you're talking about your ones-on-ones, I thought that was a sharper reflection of good football from both sides and that's really what we were looking for. No matter what, as a head coach, I'm going to be miserable, because if the defense has a great day, then the offense didn't and vice versa, but I thought the other day was a good indication of just good football, good crisp operations from both sides that look like what you're suppose to look like if you expect to be a sharp operation and outfit."

(On how the process changed this year during training camp)

"So, the first part of it, I think it's different because you're so accustomed to whatever the normal rhythm and routine is and having your four preseason games and this week would be reflective of the fourth, where you would get a lot of good snaps. I think about a guy like (WR) Nsimba Webster who just continued to shine last year and earned himself a spot on the active roster based on how he competed. But, like we've talked about throughout, I think we've got a really good feel for the 80 guys that we do have in house. We've had a lot of evaluation opportunities. We've been able to do some things in practice settings that we wouldn't do otherwise. I think being able to go live with some of those younger players to truly evaluate them has been a helpful part of the evaluation process. But, with the practice squad expanding and the limited exposure to some of these other players around the league, I think you're going to see you're going to have 69 total guys still in the building when you actually have your 16 practice squad players. Unless there's somebody that we really felt strongly about with the college free agent or the draft process that becomes available, I think you can expect a lot of teams to have some stability and not as much, kind of, poaching players if you will, from other rosters because you have limited exposure to what's going on based on how things have played out. So, do feel good about it and we feel like we've got enough evaluation opportunities to be able to identify those guys and we'll certainly use these last few days as well."

(On whether RB Darrell Henderson Jr. will practice this week)

"Yeah, I think he'll still be out. He's progressing right now. I would be surprised. Those soft-tissue injuries, especially for an explosive player like him, you don't want to rush him back and then set him back potentially another couple of weeks. He is making progress, but as far as being fully ready to compete as of right now, he's day-to-day. I'd like to say that, ideally, he ends up getting some work in towards the latter half of the week. But, if we were to practice today, he would not be ready to go."

(On whether Henderson Jr. would not be ready to play against Dallas)

"I wouldn't say that yet. We've still got some time. I think with the maturation I've seen from him, maybe if it was his rookie year, you'd say you wouldn't feel as great about it. But, I think the grasp of the offense and his ownership and the growth he's demonstrated when he was been able to practice, I feel better about that. So, I certainly would not rule him out and we're expecting him to be a big part of our running back rotation this year."

(On if S Taylor Rapp will practice and if there is any hesitation to place him in starting lineup against Dallas)

"I think you'd ideally like him to have more reps. But, we are going to phase him back in to practice this week. He's a guy who's played such a significant amount of snaps as a rookie that it's a shame because just right when you felt like he was doing such a great job and really getting a good grasp of some of the newer things we're doing, he ended up having that setback. But, definitely not going make any of those decisions right now. I think we're just fortunate to be able to get Darrell back, whenever that is, and I'm excited to get (S) Taylor (Rapp) back out on the field. What it's done, if you're saying well if it's a glass half-full approach, the opportunities it's provided for some other guys has made this feel like we'd love to have those two players available, but you do have confidence in the other guys to be able to step up with the reps they've accumulated."

(On the interview with Defensive Coordinator Brandon Staley)

"I had heard so many great things about him through people that I respect tremendously, and I really valued their opinions. I didn't take it lightly based on some of the feedback that I had gotten from, whether it was

coaches in our building or coaches outside our building, that said how impressive he was. As soon as you get with him, you could just feel the capacity. I think we both love football. We're both whacked-out in that area, where we don't have much balance – we love our families and then we love football. So, I think it was just a really seamless conversation where you felt like you've known somebody for a long time, even though it was the first time we were spending an extended amount of time together. But just, his passion, his ability to articulate, not exclusive to the defense, but an offensive understanding. He's one of those coaches that I think the best ones are the guys that truly understand all 22 (positions) and when you talk to him, it's definitely apparent that he's got a grasp and an ownership for everything that's going on, on both sides of the football. I love his philosophy. One of the things that really stood out and important is, we always talk about it's all about our players first. The vision he had for some of our special core pieces on defense was one of the things that excited me the most. He's done a great job and I'm certainly excited to be working with him. I know our players and coaches feel that way as well."

(On whether he got any weird vibes from Staley considering all the research done)

"I think he told me a little bit afterwards. No, one of the things about coaching is it's a small network. So, we knew a lot about one another and the respect was mutual. But, just the more I was able to spend time with him the more impressed you were. That still holds true even a few months later, or whatever it is, six months? Who knows. Every day runs together. It's groundhog's day every day now."