



Rams S John Johnson III – Media Availability – September 5, 2020

(On where he thinks he has grown the most since being injured)

“Yeah, it’s just understanding football, what offenses want to do. Every team is different, but I can just feel myself like naturally being in the right place, even more so than last year, or in the past. So just getting more familiar with football, because you know, people, they’re just not going to go out there and make stuff up. There’s concepts that are universal, so it’s just being in the right place at the right time and it’s paying off from just watching a bunch of ball.”

(On working with the defense this year)

“Oh, it’s fun. It’s new, it’s on the attack. (Defensive Coordinator) Coach (Brendan) Staley, he’s done a great job since Zoom meetings in the offseason, so it’s just fun being out there and I’m excited to see how we do.”

(On taking on a leadership role at safety)

“I’ve always felt like the safety should be like the quarterback of the defense. Oftentimes it’s the linebacker, the middle linebacker, but just for me personally, you know, high school, college, I was always the leader in the back of the defense. So, like you said being with Coach Staley, him putting that emphasis on the safety play and us being in the center is huge. And I love it. You know, my personality, I feel like it’s a perfect fit.”

(On what it’s like game-planning for a team with a new coach and new scheme)

“Yeah, it’s tough. Week 1 is always the toughest one, but you’ve just got to go off the offensive coordinator, the tree that he came from. I believe (Dallas Cowboys Offensive Coordinator) Kellen Moore is still there, so there might be some carry over from last year. I think just going back, watching that tape. They’ve got a young, new first-round receiver, so I don’t know how we’re going to prepare for him, but it’s a process. The coaches know best and they’re going to put us in a good situation. So like you said, there’s nothing to go off of – no preseason or anything like that. But I think just going back to that offensive coordinator tree, we will figure it out. We’ll have a good idea at least.”

(On his personal perspective and focus for getting back on the field in training camp and now preparing for Week 1)

“It’s surreal. This training camp went by so fast. Just preparing for a game, it’s different for going against our offense. We’ve been doing it for years now. So here, it’s just kind of like playing football, it’s like backyard football – you’re just alignments, assignments, just working on technique. But the actual preparation for an opponent, it’s crazy that it got here so quickly, but I’m ready for it. Our coaches always do a great job of getting us ready for the week. So, I’m excited.”

(On memories of his first game against the Cowboys and of other games against Dallas since his rookie season)

“Yeah, like you said, that was my first game that I was in the rotation. I was the third safety, so I had come in on like nickel packages and I was just out there trying to do my job. I can remember lining up, like, I think my first play I was across from Jason Witten. I grew up watching him my whole life, so I was like, wow. But yeah, I wasn’t really in the game-plan, I was just a chess piece, you know, just doing my job, making sure I did what I had to do. I had a few big key plays and then fast forward to, we played them in the playoffs. I think that’s the last time I played them, and it was a great game. It was at home, huge game. We came out

with a win; defense stopped the run. Last year was a little weird watching the game, because my idea of the Cowboys, I feel like it's always like a battle and it wasn't close. So, I wondered what happened. I'm going to definitely watch that tape even more coming into this game, but I'm excited. Sunday Night Football, new stadium against America's team, so it's just going to be a fun one."

(On how he approaches going into his final year of his contract from a mental standpoint)

"Well for me, I look at it in the lenses of this is my third year. I missed most of the last year, even though I got good tape, good production, good numbers and stuff like that, I missed last year. So, if I'm a guy upstairs, I'm like, 'Okay, where do we go from here?' So, I'm not really concerned about the contract. I'm just trying to finish my fourth year, put that same tape out there and ball out. I know the rest will take care of itself."

(On what excites him the most about the safeties group)

"I mean, I just like everyone's versatility, you know, we all can move around. Even the younger guys, I mean, we're all going to get a chance to go out there and play and I'm just happy to be within a good group of guys. We're all young, we're all energetic, we're all sponges, we're all still learning. There's not too many egos. So, I mean, I'm just excited to work with all three of those core group of safeties."

(On how he would describe this year's team now that roster cuts have been completed and how this year's team may differ from last year)

"Like I said, the feel I get, it's a lot more youthful. Starting last season, there were a lot of older veterans on the team, so it's a lot more youthful and that's kind of a good thing to me. You've got guys that are going to run, give you their all every play, every snap for, hopefully, a whole season. That's just the biggest difference I see. But you know, (we've) all been here. We've all been reppin'. We've all been getting these reps underneath our belts, so we'll be ready to go. But I just say, you know, the age thing is like the biggest thing to me."

(On young players, young coaches seeming to be the theme and if he likes that)

"Right. Yeah, I do like it."

(On what he learned from former Rams S Eric Weddle last year in terms of game preparation and on-field communication)

"It's just being a reflection of the coordinator. You've got to understand what he wants to do, what he likes to do and just working smart instead of working hard. Everybody's going to give a hundred percent effort, but if you could find ways to simplify the game, it makes you play a lot faster. I think that's one thing that Eric (Weddle) gave to me, is just certain techniques that I can see something and react faster than I would in the past. Just like little tips and stuff, releasing stems and routes and formations that he gave me just to play faster and I can relay it to the whole defense as well."

(On how he would describe this year's defense)

"Man, I'm excited to see, but if I had to describe it, I'll just say, I don't know. I'm excited. We've got guys that can run. We got guys that can cover. We've got guys that can move around, all pretty good tacklers. We're all aggressive, guys with experience, so it should be fun."

(On what goes through his mind seeing a receiver coming across the middle and how he might have to play that guy a little bit differently)

"So early on, I'd say he's got to get dealt with if he comes across in the middle, but now it's all about the ball. I'm trying to save my body and I want to run those numbers up. So, I'm not even thinking about the man – 'see ball, get ball' and if he happens to be in a way, then there's going to be a collision."

(On if he thinks receivers who like coming across the middle are unique)

"Oh, definitely. I feel like just looking at the receiver position, I call them divas. I don't think any of them like contact, any of them want to get hit. So like I said, if they come across the middle and they're in the way of the ball, it's going to be a collision."