

## **SEAHAWKS HEAD COACH MIKE HOLMGREN**

**January 18, 2006**

**(Opening...)** “Before I get started with the football questions, I want to address Sean Locklear’s situation. I met with Sean yesterday afternoon and had a good sit down with him. He was very sorry, apologized to me. This morning he apologized to his teammates. He did not want anything like this to be a distraction. He was sorry, clearly. He really does realize that the players represent the community. He is one of the guys that I think would like to be a role model in this community. He realizes that this has been a negative thing in what should be a feel good week for us. As he explained to me exactly what happened, I believe I understand what happened. At that point I have made the decision that he will play in the football game. Having said that, I would also like to caution everyone as well as our players and anyone that there is some misinformation floating around. Something as serious as this issue is, I think it is important that we let the facts come out and then what will be done will be done. He has a hearing in the middle of February at which point everyone will know all the details and then a decision will be made. I also want to emphasize and emphasize to the football team, I have four daughters and four granddaughters. My wife Kathy as worked as an advocate down at the court house the last couple years volunteering on Fridays in domestic violence issues. So as a household, we are very sensitive and as an individual I am very sensitive to this sort of thing as you might expect. Having said that, I wanted to know the details and I wanted to have an idea of what happened. It is a very, very serious issue, as it should be. But after talking with Sean (Locklear) the club made the decision we made. If at the time of the hearing a decision comes down that is unfavorable to hi, clearly the league at that point gets involved. Then, we as a club will get involved with some sort of action. I think it is very, very important to let the process happen and then we will know at the time which direction we have to go.”

**(On if this is one of the most difficult football match-ups of the year...)** “I worry about all of them. They are a good football team. Everyone knows that, they wouldn’t be where they are if they weren’t. When we look at how we match up against any team, I think there are times we might have a little more strength in the match up with a certain team more than another team and they look at it the same way. As I look at Carolina, in my opinion, they don’t have many weaknesses. They are good. I think they are well coached. They are strong. Defensively, they are very sound. They run their schemes. They are very disciplined in their schemes and they have some very special players on defense that create players for you. On offense, much has been said about Steve Smith and it should be. He is a special player, but he is not only good player they have. As much as people would say, you just have to handle Steve Smith. You have to be careful against any team like that because they have other athletes that can get you pretty good. We are preparing for them like we prepared for most teams this season with a healthy respect. But at the same time getting our work done and preparing to play our best football game.”

**(On the status of injured players...)** “Rocky (Bernard), Bobby (Engram) and Darrell will not practice today. Shaun (Alexander) is full-go. He passed some tests we gave him yesterday. He participated in our walk-through this morning and he is going to be fine. Rocky, Bobby and Darrell are real sore. They are not going to practice today. I hope I get them to practice a little bit tomorrow. We will take day-to-day with those three.”

**(On the decision to let Shaun Alexander to play...)** “I probably dealt with a situation like this since I have been a head coach maybe half dozen times with a half dozen different incidences, different players. In those six incidences there have been, in my opinion, the instances were spread out over the spectrum of what you would think or what I would think would be very, very serious. You are somewhat puzzled as to what happened or why it happened. The team I was involved with, in my understanding, making regardless of who we were playing the next week was based on our understanding of what happened. Period. The game had no bearing on it.”

**(On comparing Santana Moss and Steve Smith...)** “I think if there is a difference it is how perhaps the teams use both athletes. Moss, while he would catch intermediate balls and stuff like that, he was going downtown a lot. With Steve, they use him maybe even more. He even gets more touches and it is by design it appears. In a lot of different ways. They move him around from position to position. As far as athletically, they are both very, very fast. Their size is about the same. Without knowing them really well,

being around them and seeing them, Steve Smith for his size is very, very strong. Physically a strong guy. Has strong hands. He made a play against the bears, it is kind of indicative of the type of play he can make when both guys came down near the end zone and he had and he took it. He can make that type of play. But, you have to think about them the same way, I believe. I think as a defensive team you better think about them the same way."

**(On how Carolina changes without Foster...)** "You know what? It's a little like us, actually, without having Shaun Alexander, without having...it wouldn't be that dramatic. He's their starting back. DeShaun Foster is a very explosive guy. His style of running, of starting here and popping there. And he has great speed. The young man who is going to be playing the position, we assume: Different style of runner. Pretty effective, and a tough guy. But if the play is designed over there, that's pretty much where he's going to go. He may make one guy miss, but that's where he's going to go. DeShaun, he was a little more unpredictable that way. I don't imagine that they would change dramatically on the type of plays they would call. John likes to run the ball over the years. I don't think they are going to change too much that way."

**(On comparing Julius Peppers and Michael Strahan...)** "Very different. Different body types, different experience. Both of them very good players. But Michael Strahan is a guy who has been in the league a long time, been very good for a long time, been to a lot of Pro Bowls. Peppers is taller, bigger, a different set of problems. He's lanky. Difficult to block. But really, the players are quite different. But when you are preparing for those two teams, as an offensive coach, I've told you before in here that sometimes you see a team and you say, 'OK. You start here. And you try to take care of business here. Otherwise this is going to be too disruptive. Peppers is that type of player. Michael is, too. But they're different."

**(On the thought of leaving after last year...)** "I'm glad I stayed."

**(On difference in relationships with Tim Ruskell and Bob Whitsitt...)**

"Well, I'm going to ... Again, anytime you get into one of those situations, there is a fair amount of misinformation and supposition, I would say. I would just say, Tim Ruskell \_ I'm going to talk about Tim Ruskell \_ he is a lifelong football personnel man. This has been his business for a lot a lot of years. It has been my experience in working with football men like Ron Wolff, and now Tim, who started out as scouts and how have been personnel people and that's what they've done in their careers, they have a passion for it. They want to help the head coach. They want to give him the best players they can give him. And it creates a real healthy trust and working relationship. And Tim has done that. Bob's first love, as you know, was basketball. And he was good at that. And he was taking on a lot of jobs. So it's different now, because Tim is a lifelong football guy. I would say that is the difference. We have a good relationship."

**(On if Whitsitt not being a lifelong football executive was a drawback...)** "I said Bob was a basketball guy. His forte was basketball. That's how he started. He was president of the Trail Blazers, as you know. I just think it's very difficult to do both, you know?"

**(On the success of the Seahawks at home and the Panthers on the road....)** "I'm envious. I heard something this morning about Pittsburgh's road record, I admire that. It's very difficult to win on the road and teams that have figured out how to do that on a consistent basis usually will be very good and be in the playoffs. It's tough. I've always started from the other way, knowing that if you're not good at home, you have no chance at being good at anything. That's how I started. I also know that you have to be a capable road team, you have to be able to win on the road. At some point you're going to play big games on the road. But I've always approached it, let's learn to be dominant at home and then we'll go to plan B. So our fans I think appreciate that to get excited about coming to a game at Qwest Field and I think we've developed that and I think that's a real healthy thing. That's the model we used in Green Bay too, we had a good home record in Green Bay, for a lot of years it was very good. That's the way it should be, you should have the homefield advantage. Then the trick is to get good on the road."

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**(On what he is telling the team regarding their accomplishments thus far...)** “Not yet. I think if you sat in on the Monday film session after Saturday's game, some of them don't feel really great after that session in there. But, heck, they have had a real solid good years, particularly for young people. That really is something that's quite different. There are enough little mess ups in the game and sometimes big mess ups that you talk about the good stuff and pat them on the back, but hammer home those other things just so they know we're still playing here and they have not arrived. and at the same time I acknowledge the fact, to them, that we've played great team defense all year. there are the critics that would say we've given up too many yards and why do certain things happen in certain situations, and I get that, we all have questions about that. At the same time our points allowed has been very, very good, which has ultimately been the most important thing. Our red zone defense has been very good. and most of all, the team feeling and effort and enthusiasm and the grit of the group has been outstanding. I mean really outstanding. And they've played very unselfish football. They've encouraged one another. They seem to get along with one another. They have each others back. There is a lot of good stuff going on with our defense and that's allowed us to be where we are.”

**(On how much of the team's success is grounded in the offensive line...)** “For a play caller, and in my old jobs as coordinator, even though I coached quarterbacks, every offensive coordinator would tell you this, if you don't have confidence in the offensive line you can't get anything done. You really can't get anything done. You could have the best quarterback in the world, the best running back in the world and if you don't have a solid offensive line, and we're better than solid, we're good, you can't do anything. You can't get first downs you get sacked on third down, you can't make third-and-1, you can't do anything. In building a team, you had better understand that, unless you have one of those defenses where it doesn't matter. Some teams are fortunate to have over the years, some defenses are so good it almost, you play offense not to make mistakes. And I've never done that. I don't like that, it's no fun for me. So you'd better have your offensive line and build it and think about it and develop it that way, because they're everything.”

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**(On if this is the best offensive line he's worked with...)** “I've ever been involved with? I'd have to say it is. I've been fortunate enough to be around good lines before. When I was a coordinator in San Francisco, of course before free agency, those guys had been together eight, nine, 10 years, together. And then you function because continuity is so important in the offensive line. But since free agency, yeah this group is the best I've had the privilege of being around.”

**(On guys filling in for injured players, and whether this is the best example of it he's had...)** “I think you could make a case for that. Although I've been on coaching staffs and teams where we've had guys get hurt and guys would step in and play, and play very well. The character of your football team, though, if it happens too much, you really learn about that. And if you lose a player you think is a Pro Bowl type player, and everyone thinks, oh, it's over, and yet a guy ... Now, I hope I don't embarrass him because he's such a great kid, but Marquand Manuel, when we lost Hamlin, I looked at Marquand as a good, solid safety, but more a key guy for our special teams. A high-effort guy, fearless, a blow-em-up type guy. And now all of a sudden he's our starting safety, directing traffic back there and changing things, and he's had a phenomenal season. I'll never forget that. When I'm in my nursing home porch in my rocker – it might be next year – that type of effort, that is just a wonderful thing for a coach to see.”

**(On Ken Lucas)** “Kenny's having a great year. Everyone has to know this, and you probably know this already: we didn't want to lose Ken Lucas (I know he said Hamlin, but we know what he meant). We wanted to keep Ken Lucas. And in free agency, when he became free, Carolina offered him just a phenomenal financial package, and he was gone. Ken had developed his skills. We drafted him, we liked him, he had gotten better and better and better and now he's playing at a certain level. That was a good signing by Carolina. But, like any other player you lose in free agency, what you have to do is say, OK, you lost a fine football player, what are you going to do? What we did is we went out and signed Dyson and Herndon. At any position, whoever you lose – Chike, when we lost Chike to Arizona, what do you do? We signed Bryce Fisher. Most often, you can't fill the void right away. It's tough to get a player for a player a lot of times. So, what has to happen is that all 11 players have to come together and make up for any little differences you may have lost in the deal. That's what you do. And I thought the organization did a nice job. We went out and signed John Howell in free agency, the two corners, we developed Babineaux. I think our defensive coaches did a nice job of trying to fix that.”

**(On the chemistry between Darrell Jackson and Matt Hasselbeck...)** “Their history helps them. They’ve been together for a couple three years. Since Matt’s been starting, Darrell’s been our No. 1 receiver. But Darrell hasn’t really practiced. That’s about the only practice they’ve had together in about 10 weeks. But they have been together, they talk to each other a lot, they talk to each other in practice. Just to make sure, if there’s any rust at all, let’s remember how to do this. But both of them are trying real hard. We need Darrell. But I think the real answer is that Matt’s thrown a lot of passes to Darrell, in practice and during the season, in the last four years. That’s what’s allowed us to not skip a beat.”

**(On Darrell Jackson’s touchdown...)** “On that particular play, Matt was throwing it away from the defender. That’s something you never practice. To me, that was more an athletic play. Darrell’s a phenomenal athlete. If you watch closely, he caught the ball with one hand. In fact, he never had two hands on the football. He kind of caught it with one hand, brought it up with one hand. It was one of the most amazing things I’ve seen. Matt threw the ball right where he had to throw it, and Darrell made a beautiful, beautiful adjustment. You’re right. That had nothing to do with playing with each other for four years, after my great speech. That was just a great play by our receiver. That wasn’t planned; we don’t practice that. Matt just threw it away from the defender, hoping Darrell would do what he did, and he did.”

**(On who is going to return punts this week...)** “The first guy we’re going to give a crack at doing this is Peter Warrick. I talked to him today and I said ‘Look, I know what kind of a position I’m putting you in. Because you’re going to go out there and the whole world is going to be watching and they’re going to be mad at you and they’re going to be mad at me if things go bad. But that’s the way it’s going to go. How do you feel about that?’ And Peter does not lack confidence now. He was very appreciative and very happy. We’re going to give him a crack at doing this. And then Bobby Engram would be the one that we could always put in there. I talked to Jimmy (Williams) today and said we were going to make the switch. Obviously he felt very bad. He goes ‘Well, can I run patterns because we’re a little banged up?’ I think this is worth telling because this is kind of typical of this team this year. After I told him he’s not doing what he loves to do, which is return punts, he goes ‘Coach, I’m sorry.’ I said ‘But I gotta do this.’ So then I said you’re going to be involved in other things on special teams. You’re going to be doing some other things. And he goes OK. And then earlier I said I need everyone to pitch in because we’re short receivers you know. And he goes ‘I’ll help you. I’ll help you today running routes.’ Right after I took his job away from him. That’s been this season, and things like that as they come up, I shouldn’t be surprised anymore with this group. Again a very unselfish thing and he’s a great young man but we’re going to make the change.”

**(On why he went away from Warrick earlier as a punt returner...)** “Well, I think when he came in, he was new to us. Learning some things. If you remember early on, he had a tough day returning punts in a preseason game or something. He really looked very uncomfortable back there and so, why throw him into the frying pan, which is what I’m doing now. Why do it then? It’s the championship game and we’re throwing everyone into the frying pan (uproar laughter). But that’s what happened and then he has played. I will say this, I think, and he says no, but I’m the coach and he’s the player, but I think his leg, when we got him he was still getting better. He was still testing it. Now, I’ve noticed it most obviously in routes, he is running better. He has great hands but he is running better and my hope is now returning punts that he can give us a little boost there.”

**(On Mack Strong after Saturday’s long run...)** “Yeah. Yeah. It’s interesting, he made that run...I shouldn’t tell you this. Alright I’ll tell you. He makes the run and I look at Matt and I’m going to call him again. And he’s down there and we’re in pretty good position and I’m going to give it to the fullback. I think at the time Mo was still a little wacky, he got hit in the head. I was going to give Mack the ball again and call the play and I sent the play in and Matt goes (shakes his head no). I get on the phone and I say hey, it’s one thing audibling but when he goes like this (shakes his head no again) I call it again and he points to Mack and I see him. Tobeck and those guys in the huddle, they’re kind of giggling and I go here we are in the third grade. So I had to call a different play. Maybe we even called timeout, I don’t remember, but Mack was a little gassed after that play. If you ask him that, he’ll of course deny it.”

**(On if Steve Smith is the kind of guy you game plan for...)** “With the numbers he has put up, I think if you don’t approach it at the start that way, you’re making a huge mistake. He catches 14 balls, 12 balls, 13 balls, that’s a lot of passes in a game. And then touchdowns, and he returns punts for them. He does a lot of stuff. Clearly, they want him to be a big part of what they do. He’s a wide receiver, Michael Vick’s a quarterback, but you play against great players on offense, and you better have some sort of answer for playing them or they can make you look pretty bad.”

**(On Holmgren’s experience in a Championship game helping the team...)** “What I’ve tried to do is make this as normal a week as possible. There’s more requests, there’s more media, the week is different that way, a little different than a normal week. But the practice week and your preparation, if you’re selling something during the year of how to do this and where we set the bar and this is the way we approach each week. Now, all of a sudden to say, OK, the only thing I might ask them to do is get a little more sleep. Be a little smarter in what you eat. You don’t have to go shopping at the mall. Tell your wife, blame me. Those types of things, just to say, ‘OK, we’ve got to elevate. Whatever gear we’re in, now this is the championship and you’ve got to shove it into the next gear.’ But our week of preparation, I would expect it to be how we practiced and how we prepared all season long. And if you ever get a chance to go to the next game, where it gets really wacky, you really must sell the same thing in my opinion. So they know what’s at stake. And so you don’t have to talk too much about that. But if there’s a messup in practice, if I reacted any differently this week than I have in the last week, they’d think something was wrong. So I have to be coaching the same way, not overreact to things, not peak too early. We’re playing the game Sunday. And just get ‘em ready to play.”

**(On this year’s draft class given the success of Lofa and Leroy...)** “It usually takes three or four years to really look back on a draft. If you ask me to name our draft choices right now, I couldn’t I don’t think. Spencer is our first one. We talked about Chris the other day and I think he has a bright future. Thank goodness Robbie came back and played because he’s had a great year and he’s been one of those guys I talked about (with) leadership that really helps this team. But Chris Spencer, I don’t have any doubt he’s going to be a fine player for a long time. You get Lofa, Leroy. Who are some other guys?”

**(On David Greene...)** “Well David, put the quarterback in a separate category. A lot of times you don’t find out about those guys for five years, really, unless you’re in a situation where he has to play. So David, I think, will be fine, but we won’t know for a while”

**(On Cornelius Wortham...)** “Wortham, we brought him up. Huckleba got hurt. I think just even though we won’t know for sure for I would say honestly for three or four years, my guess is that people will look back on this draft as being pretty good.

**(On Ray Willis...)** “Ray was prepared, I think he was active for the Green Bay game. He was. He played a lot against the Packers. We have a veteran offensive line. We have tackles that are pretty good. We could not have envisioned, I don’t think, Sean Locklear coming in and doing what he’s done this year and playing so well. But Pork Chop was ready to do that. Ray Willis give us some flexibility. He’s a big strong man who gives you everything he’s got. I like Ray Willis. He just hasn’t gotten that much of a chance to play.”

**(On when you have a player who is annoying but not destructive – can you change them or find ways to make them fit...)** “That’s a really good question and I think every coach and every team has to deal with that, some more than others. Take a new coach coming into a new situation. You learn about your players and you say OK I have a couple guys like the fellow you mentioned, you described. I think there’s one of a couple things that could happen. One, if he’s too annoying and if he is too selfish, then you get rid of him. Somehow you trade him or do something if you can. If it’s annoying but bearable then what you do is you sit him down and try and change his habits, change him a little bit. And it’s been my experience sometimes you can do that. Sometimes you can do that. Then if you can’t, then you trade him, then you get rid of him. But you give him a chance. If he’s really a good player, obviously most guys you give them a little more rope because – it’s interesting – you think you need them to be good. I’m not so sure that’s always the best way to go. But you think you need him to be good and sometimes that works. And if it doesn’t work,

eventually they leave. Eventually they leave. And you might get a player of a little lesser talent but he's unselfish, team guy, great in the locker room and a funny things happens. You are a better team. You wind up, it's better. And those lessons are very difficult to learn. And particularly if you think the player is the player you need to win one more game, two more games, get to the playoffs, get to the championship game.

**(On having a receiver people tried to shut down in Jerry Rice with the 49ers, what do teams do...)**

“Well, we're going to try and do that. I'm not going to go into detail on that. When we were in Green Bay we played in that great playoff game. It was actually the big "hump" game for our franchise there when I was there. We upset them in the second round of the playoffs. We were the wild-card team. They were really good and Jerry was tremendous. A tremendous player. And I believe that day he caught seven balls for 87 yards, something like that. Eight balls. But he didn't score a touchdown and he didn't break anything, I think he didn't break anything longer than 12 yards. So what happens is, I don't think the great ones, you ever shut them down completely. If you do, something else is happening. It's not coverage. Either you're getting a tremendous pass rush, the quarterback is having a bad day, something else is happening. The great pass receiver is going to catch his balls and he's going to gain his yards. You just hope he's not too much of a disruption in the game. And then don't push the panic button when he does catch a pass. You've got to tackle him. Don't let him run all over the place. Team defense is huge when you're playing against a great player. You've got to get good pursuit angles, you've got to tackle. You can't miss tackles.

**(On what the success of team means to city and the region...)** “Oh, I don't know. You'd have to talk to someone who has lived in Seattle a lot longer than I have but I know it's ... it's fun is all I can say. It's the people seem to be very, very excited. If I've heard it once I've heard it 100 times: I've been a Seahawks fan since the inception of the team. And that's fun. It's really exciting. I've said before one of the joys of being able to take a team all the way, whether it was Green Bay or in San Francisco, was the joy it gave the community. As part of this organization and to hear how important in any number of ways the team is to people, football fans, non-football fans, there's just a, it's good. It's one of the gratifying things about my job.”