

December 16, 2022

## **Defensive Backs Coach Chris Harris**

### **On growth from S Darrick Forrest and CB Benjamin St-Juste:**

"I've seen guys that were really starting to get a grasp of just the game in general and people tend to make their biggest jumps between their first and second years. When you come into the league, you're still kind of green, you're still learning. And then you see it for the first time that first season. So everything's so fast your first year and things tend to slow down for you going into that second year. You feel a little bit more comfortable. You've kind of seen some things. You don't know everything, but you've seen some of these things. And so the game starts to slow down for you, you understand and learn how to study things you should be looking for. Because when you come into the NFL, you don't know and it's no fault of your own. You just don't know. And so, they constantly been learning and we've been seeing really good growth out of both of those guys."

### **On working with S Jeremy Reaves:**

"I love working with Jeremy. He's one of the most resilient guys I've been around. He's a guy that you always root for. We've built a really close relationship over my three years here and I kind of see where he came from. He's been on the practice squad his entire career. He's never made active an active 53-man roster after the cutdowns. And to see him work his tail off and be rewarded with that and making a 53 man roster the first cutdown, it was fun for me to watch that. And I know it was exciting for him. So, I have always pulled for Jeremy."

### **On if he anticipated the defense playing six defensive back sets coming into the year:**

"It's been fun. The more guys I get out there to win the happier I am. I'm always excited to have the DB's out there on the field. And if they continue to make plays, they'll continue to be out there. It was kind of something I'm familiar with because we did it with the Chargers when I was in LA with the Chargers. I mean, we went to a game against Baltimore and played with seven DBs the entire game and won. It makes it easy when you have smart football players and what I mean by smart guys that can learn multiple positions. And when you have guys who can go to this position one play and the very next play, go to this position and then the very next play go to a third position. When you have guys with that capability and that type of brain power, it makes it a lot easier."

### **On if it was the plan or he adapted to playing more DB sets:**

"We've kind of adapted to that. We've got guys like [S] Bobby [McCain] who's a very smart player. [S] Kam [Curl] is a very smart player, [CB] Kendall [Fuller] is very alike, so we have various guys that can do multiple things. And that's the beauty of when you have versatile safeties, especially at the safety position, you have versatile guys who can drop down and play nickel, drop back and play in the box, play strong safety, and then turn around and drop back and playing post. It makes it a lot easier for a play caller to get some things done."

**On how hard it is to find versatile DB's:**

"It can be difficult. It is a process. So you know, you have to understand how the guys learn, figure out how they learn and the capability of retaining a lot of information. And for some more than other football comes a little easier to some than it does to other people. And that's no right, wrong or indifferent, just everybody's wired differently. As far as their learning capacity and the way they learn and how quickly they can learn. So as you go through these processes, whether it be a free agency, whether it be during a draft and you sit down and talk with guys, you just kind of talk football just in general to see what type of general football knowledge that they have. And you may be teaching 'em something and see if they can retain it like that and regurgitate it back to you. And when you have a guy like that that you can sit down with him for a few minutes and you basically teach 'em a concept or you teach this back to me and you see how much they can retain, how much information that they can spit back to you. And that right there gives you somewhat of an indication without even having him for a whole year and going through and teaching and them learning."

**On development of S Kam Curl:**

"Kam's overall knowledge of the game and his overall knowledge of scheme and how guys are attacking him. In our meeting rooms we talk about different schemes, different things, okay, that's how guys are lining up. And I think it helps that he's been playing. Because the more you play, the more experience you get, the better you become at that. And him getting the opportunity to play early due to [Giants S] Landon [Collins] injury his first season here in 2020, and then him just taking that step, step after step after step. I think his play recognition and his overall football awareness, like everybody doesn't have that and all players don't have that. And he has a football awareness where he understands, he sees something and he can go, he sees it before it happens, and he can go make the play."

**On the next step for S Kam Curl's growth:**

"For Kam probably being more of a vocal guy. He's not like, he's not shy. He may be the funniest guy in our room. He's one of the jokers in the room. You probably wouldn't know it, but when he's around you, he's a very funny guy. And so getting him to take that next step of really being that leader, that vocal alpha leader, because he's more of a lead by example type guy. And everybody leads in their way and there's no right and wrong way to be a leader. But seeing him take that next step from a vocal leadership, I think that's his next progression."

**On what sticks out to him about CB Kendall Fuller:**

"He's just reliable. Kendall's another one of those cerebral players that I was talking about. The game of football comes really easy to him. I mean, he has a great football pedigree. I mean all three of his other brothers all play ball and it's just kind of in them. And for Kendall, he studies the game. Like he really studies the game. He watches football, not just a team we're playing. He watches everybody and we have conversations, we have little sessions in our meeting rooms where we just try to become the smartest football players that we can be. We do a session every Friday we call learn from others. And so I would pick random clips throughout the league of some things that were good and things that were bad. And just teaching the overall game of football and his knowledge of the game is just, it's probably some of the best from a corner standpoint, because you don't see that from a lot of corners. You see it more from safety. Because safeties are more a part of the run game and the pass game corners really aren't involved in that. They're just part of the pass game. But he has a very good understanding of what everybody does, all 11 guys on defense."

**On how the safety position has changed since he last played:**

“Oh my God, it's changed drastically. I can't do the things that these guys did. 15 years ago when I was playing it was he had a guy that was like the guy in the back single high safety that roamed lacrosse and then he had the guy that was down in the box tone setter, thumper. And so now the game has changed that it is, it's such a space game. Everything is designed for mismatches and creating space for playmakers because these guys on offense are dynamic. I mean, you get guys who can catch the ball out the backfield, they can be a receiver as well as running the ball. You get guys who are receivers, they put 'em in the backfield, they run. We have Curtis [Samuel] here. I mean, so teams are constantly trying to create mismatches and the safety's now you have to have enough flexibility to be able to drop down into a box as Kam [Curl] does or even as Bobby [McCain] does. And then to be able to go and cover in the slide and cover a wide receiver, running backs and tight end. So, I think it's probably better athletes now in today's game than probably when we were playing.”

**On if defensive backs are becoming position-less in a way:**

“Somewhat, somewhat. Like our own guys, you look at Kam, you look at Bobby. You look at Honey Badger [Tyrann Mathieu]. Guys like that who drop around and move around and play all over the place. So I tell our guys in our room when we first start OTAs and everything that you're a DB, you're not a corner, you're not safety, you're not a nickel, you're a db. And so, we go about it that way from a learning standpoint and it may be difficult at first, but I'm trying to help the guys with their overall football knowledge, so them having a full understanding and the workings of the entire back end, I think it helps them become better football players.”

**On how hard it is to go against a player like WR Curtis Samuel that has a lot of versatility:**

“You know, it creates those matchup problems that offenses, they're trying to get a guy say a linebacker on 'em. They that by putting 'em in the back field. Teams like San Francisco, they go 21 personnel meaning two backs, one tight end, but yet they give you 11 personnel looks cause they have the ability to put the fullback in the back field as a running back, put a running back outside of wide receiver and vice versa, put a wide receiver in the back field. So they're constantly trying to create these mismatches and seeing Curtis, our guys kind of get prepared cuz then we get put in those situations in practice, especially during training camp and OTAs having to defend that with our own offense.”

**On they have to do better in coverage this week:**

“We gotta eliminate the deep ball and not give up the explosive play. We had one explosive last week, I think the 50-yarder and just make sure we do a great job of being strong up with the ball. Understanding the formations because formations speak a lot and I tell our guys, Hey, you listen with your eyes. That's how we listen in in football. We listen with our eyes by formations. So, seeing formations and seeing certain things and understanding what you get and when you're about to get it and make sure we do a great job of, of not giving up anything deep, make them earn it, make them have to go the long hard way.”

**On offenses running the ball more as a reaction to playing five/six defensive backs:**

“It may be. They may think they have a mismatch. For us, I don't think it is a mismatch because I think our guys are very capable and I think they do a really good job coming up to support the run and playing the run game. Like I said, I keep going back to Kam [Curl], Kam plays strong safety, plays free safety, plays nickel. He plays dime. Linebacker. He's in the box. Shedding blocks and doing those things. So, I think they may deem it as a possible advantage to them, but us, me, I don't.”

**On if CB Benjamin St-Juste will play this weekend and the impact he can have:**

“So we're still kind of seeing where it is. He's still questionable right now. We'll get a gauge of that game day. But Benjamin is a true game changer. He's a difference maker. He has the ability to go up there, press men

get his hands on guys and he does a great job of defending the 50-50 balls because of his length and his length gives people a real problem as far as trying to see over him on those 50-50 balls, deep balls when he's just in the way. He does a good job of playing with poise and not panicking when he has back to the ball. So I'm not gonna say pleasant surprise cause this is what we thought when we drafted him when we got him two years ago.”

**On the conversation you have with CB Christian Holmes when you have to put him on the bench but will have to use him in the future:**

“Oh man, we still got the most confidence in Christian. It's just one of those things that uh, we felt Danny [Johnson] would give us a chance. And for Christian, it is just for him, Hey, this is a learning experience. Everything is a learning experience and you can take them one or two ways. You can be in the tank about it or hey, you can get better at it, you continue to work and keep going. I have the utmost faith in Christian Holmes. He's a young player. He's a rookie and we've all been, when I say we, I've been in those shoes having been a rookie and going through some of the growing pains that come with being a rookie and you learn from them and you keep growing. And so, the best experience is actually getting out there and playing experience, so getting that experience I think will only help Christian.”

**On how the secondary has had to react since CB William Jackson III has been traded:**

“Like you said, it caused other guys to be thrust in positions. For example, Benjamin [St-Juste]. When Will left Benjamin stepped in and I think he's done a really good job for us. We have such a tight group, the cohesiveness. Everybody wished Will well. Miss Will, but it was one of those things as far as this, this professional sport and haven't been a part of two trades in my career as a player. You know, it is one of those things that you just kind it comes with the territory, it comes with being professional athlete.”

**On CB Tariq Castro-Fields:**

“Oh man, he's another young. I think we have some good young talent around here. And so he was the one I was very excited about and he kind of hurt himself during practice one day and got kind of put on the shelf. But, he's one that, that I'm excited to work with. He's still working on the sideline with the guy cause he is not on the active roster right now. But, he's a guy that has really good speed. I think he has really good lint and he's a guy that we we're definitely excited about.