



CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

Defensive Coordinator Steve Wilks 5-22-19

Defensive coordinator Steve Wilks:

On if he knows which positions the new LBs will play:

“We are still working on it. The biggest thing is that when you really look at our linebacker core, everything is versatile. Meaning right now, you talk about MIKE, SAM and WILL, but it is really interchangeable.”

On DE Myles Garrett and allowing him to have more of an arsenal pass rushing:

“Not just Myles, but with all of our players. We want to make sure that we put them in the best position to be successful. Not trying to limit them, and I don’t even know if that was the case last year. Moving forward, I want him – because he is so talented – to know how to use all of his assets.”

On if he sees Garrett reaching the next step of his development:

“I think so. It is that time. First overall pick. Very talented individual. Played well last year, and I think you are only going to see continued growth out of him each and every year.”

On if he saw Garrett only using two moves after watching last year’s tape:

“No, I really did not even look at it in that respect. I just try to evaluate the individual and not so much the scheme because everything is different. I have a lot of respect for Gregg (Williams). He has been in this league for a long time and has definitely proved himself. With Myles moving forward, along with all the other guys, we are just going to put them in the best position to be successful.”

On if the Browns are looking for leaders to emerge on defense:

“It is always hard to say. When you try to identify certain leaders, Myles a leader; (CB) Denzel (Ward) is a leader just because they are star players. (S) Jermaine Whitehead is a leader in my opinion so you don’t have to be that quote on quote guy that everybody looks at. I want all those guys to be leaders when they are out there on that field because we need everybody communication, talking being on the same page”

On Whitehead as a leader:

“Extremely smart. Very intelligent. Takes control when he is out there. Knows how to really communicate and articulate the defense and get everybody on the same page.”

On how a player like Whitehead who hasn’t had many opportunities is able to become a leader:

“I am not surprised at all. He has been in the league for a while, been on several teams. It just shows who he is as an individual. He puts in a lot of time into his craft. He studies the game a lot, and it really shows out on the field.”

On how Garret’s game has changed with the addition of DE Olivier Vernon:

“Not so much and it is very hard to determine right now; as you just mentioned, we don’t have pads on. I like the addition with (DT) Sheldon (Richardson), as well. I think those two guys are going to be great for us. Their presence in the room and not only on the field has shown up this far. Does it take some pressure off Myles? Maybe it does. I do not know yet. We will have to wait and see, but I know those guys are going to be a major factor either making plays or allowing Myles to make plays.”

On the overall ability of the Browns defense:

“I think we are making progress. When you really look at where we were on April 1, how we started out with Phase I, Phase II, you have seen the development and growth of a lot of guys. Depth, we are always looking for depth. You saw that with the draft and the number of guys that we picked up. That is always



CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

going to be important because you are going to have injuries throughout the year and that is why it is so important as a staff that we really develop those guys.”

On competition at SS:

“It is still open. It is still too early to determine that. Everybody is going to have the opportunity to be able to get in there and showcase their talent and perform. Right now, we are just trying to lay a great – really the fundamentals and technique of the position. Those guys are doing a good job at really picking up the system. It is too early to determine who are going to be the starters.”

On CB Greedy Williams:

“No. 1, he is long and he is athletic. This game right now, you talk about the different receivers and the types that we have as far as big bodies. I love long corners. He is definitely that, very athletic, can run and he is very physical. That is important in the run game with me, that our corners tackle. We don’t have pads on right now, but you can see that athleticism out there on the field and the way he moves around.”

On if he has talked to Williams about tackling:

“Not a lot, but he made it aware that he is not afraid to tackle. He just needs to understand the technique and how to do it. That is encouraging because I always say that the identity of our defense is not really how physical our front seven plays but really our secondary, most importantly, and how our corners tackle.”

On how much emphasis he places on tackling technique:

“I think you really have to be able to teach the guys the different technique and fundamentals, understanding exactly where their help is within that particular play. I know Denzel last year had a situation when he had come in and threw his body around which resulted into some concussions. We really have to teach these guys how to tackle.”

On if he feels like he is in a race because it is the Browns’ first year installing his scheme:

“No, not at all. I think it is about layers on your defense, layers on your team. Freddie has done a good job of really setting the tone, expectations and really implementing the plan not only with the coaches but with the players. I am very confident in where we are right now and the direction in which we are going. The players are doing a great job picking up the system and executing.”

On how Whitehead can fit into the defense:

“He is a guy that is very smart and that can play multiple positions. You put yourself in a situation when guys get hurt; it is really just plug and play with him. It is still too early to determine. I like what he is doing and most importantly, his leadership.”

On how much would he like to have the option of playing three Ss:

“I think the word that you used is trust and that goes with any position. Where the game is today and how they try to spread you out quite a bit, you would like to have to option to be able to put those guys on the field so you are a little bit more athletic in space.”

On if Whitehead offers several likeable traits for the scheme:

“I would say that. When you really look at the position – as the question before you talked about offense trying to spread you out, trying to get you into a situation and really trying to create that match up with the linebacker – you like to be able to try to put more athletic guys on the field in regards to another safety. Whitehead does give you that option, but it is still too early to determine that.”

On areas for improvement:

“No. 1, we have to do a much better job in our tackling. That was an issue of concern last year. I would say this, too: this is a pass-happy league, but we have to stop the run. Gap integrity is going to be extremely



CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

important to us. I have said it over and over again, there is nothing more demoralizing to a defense than having an offense run the ball down your throat. We have to do a great job of stopping the run and most importantly, tackling.”

On free agent DT Gerald McCoy:

“I think he is a good football player. I know he is out there now, and that is pretty much it.”

On if Ward can improve his tackling:

“I think it is definitely correctable. It is more teaching the proper technique and that is where we are right now in this phase of OTAs. Really giving him the fundamentals of understanding how to tackle in certain situations where the ball carrier is. I also think it is important to understand where your help is coming from, too.”

On S Morgan Burnett:

“Veteran leadership. A guy that has been what I consider battle tested. He has been around. Very smart. Very intelligent. I like his physicality when he is out there. He communicates well, and that is very important on the back end when you really start talking and trying to get everybody aligned.”

On if he knew S Damarious Randall prior to joining the Browns:

“Damarious and I had a relationship, really an introduction through the draft process. I went out there and worked him out. Spent a little bit of time with him one on one. It was a private workout. Very athletic, extremely smart guy. He has shown that over the years with his versatility and his ability to be able to get interceptions. That is a major part of what we emphasize and talk about is taking the ball away.”

On if the Browns prefer to leave Randall at FS:

“He is definitely a free safety in our system. The door is always open from a standpoint of versatility because you never know exactly how it is going to be week to week and really trying to create the proper matchup.”

On if DT Larry Ogunjobi can become a Pro Bowl player:

“I think Larry has it. It is early. We have no pads on. Larry is doing a tremendous job in really the method in how he practices. I have seen him get better from Day 1. He is doing a great job in the meeting, picking the system up and most importantly coming out here executing. He has the talent and the skillset. We will see how it goes.”

On viewing Vernon on his past production or how he can produce in the future:

“I think it is a little bit of both. You know exactly what you are getting from a standpoint of the player. You see his skillset over the years and his ability to be able to change the complexity of a game. I am hoping he can do the same thing for us. The guy can rush the passer, but most importantly, it is just that emphasis for us stopping the run. I think he’s going to complement Sheldon, as well as Myles.”

On Browns defensive starters contributing on special teams:

“This is a team game. Special teams is a major part of what we do and the point of emphasis to the defensive guys is that, I hope we are all on special teams. Some of these guys, that is how they are going to make the team. In order for us to get to where we are going, special teams is going to be a major part of that. The defensive guys are definitely going to have to show up.”

On the Browns LBs ability in this system:

“You guys saw (LB) Joe (Schobert) last year and saw his ability to be able to perform out in space. I think he does that well. Joe is extremely smart. Smart players know how to put themselves in positions to be successful. (LB Christian) Kirksey – athletic, he is a smart, physical guy. I think these guys can run. You have to have that matchup with these talented tight ends that can get vertical down the field. I think we have



CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

that in these two linebackers but also able to spread out in space over to the slot receiver. I have no problem with these guys playing out in space.”

On DT Sheldon Richardson opening up the pass rush for other players:

“I think he fits right into that mode. When you go back and look at his history in his past, you have seen him dominate inside at times like that. That is what we are expecting him to do. It puts us in a situation to where they can’t always slide one way to another, and if they do, it is going to open up things on the opposite side. Most importantly, the ability to push the pocket and try to get the quarterback flushed outside to OV as well as Myles; I think Sheldon is going to do a great job inside for us.”

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