

Rams cancel practice after positive tests

Caution is taken for a player and a staff member who later retested negative.

BY GARY KLEIN

Coming off a Monday night victory in Tampa, Fla., Rams coach Sean McVay planned for an abbreviated week of preparation for Sunday's game against the San Francisco 49ers at SoFi Stadium.

A late-week day off from the practice field was not part of the original schedule.

But the Rams got one Friday as McVay and his team navigated their way through a COVID-19-related situation.

McVay said Friday afternoon that he was made aware late Thursday night that a player and a staff member — not a coach — had tested positive. Both were retested twice, on Thursday and Friday morning, and all tests were negative, McVay said.

Still, the Rams announced Friday morning that practice had been canceled "out of an abundance of caution" and that all meetings would be conducted virtually. McVay said that windy conditions — "It's like a tornado, like a wind tunnel out there at our facilities" — and the opportunity to give players added time off their feet also contributed to his decision, the latest change of plan in a season like no other because of the pandemic.

demic.

"You realize how quickly it can catch up with you, especially when you start to look at what possibly could have occurred as a result of close-contact tracing — all those things had those results been positive," McVay said during a videoconference with reporters. "Fortunately, we didn't have to suffer the consequences. But it was a good way of kind of resetting your focus and understanding how crazy this thing all is."

The day off from the practice will not adversely affect the Rams on Sunday against the 49ers, cornerback Jalen Ramsey said.

"Things happen, you've got to be able to adapt to it," Ramsey said during a videoconference with reporters. "Safety's first, so that's what matters."

It was the second time in as many weeks that COVID-19 affected the Rams.

On Nov. 18, the Rams placed three players — defensive back Jake Gervase, tight end Kendall Blanton and receiver J.J. Koski on the reserve/COVID-19 list. Blanton and Koski have since returned to practice, a team official said. None of the players have been active for a game this season.

The Rams dealt with COVID-19 issues before the season. Offensive linemen Brian Allen and Andrew Whitworth tested positive during the spring and summer, respectively. Rookie outside linebacker Terrell Lewis'



WILFREDO LEE Associated Press

RAMS COACH Sean McVay said "my understanding is that we're kicking off" on Sunday against the 49ers after a coronavirus scare within the Rams organization.

ability to participate in team activities was delayed after he tested positive in August.

The 49ers are in the midst of dealing with far more COVID-19 issues.

Receiver Brandon Aiyuk and offensive lineman Trent Williams are among six players on the reserve/COVID-19 list. Defensive linemen Arik Armstead and Javon Kinlaw and offensive lineman Hroniss Grasu came off the list this week.

Three players — tight end Jordan Reed and linebackers Dre Greenlaw and Azeem Al-Shaair — did not practice Thursday or Friday because

of unspecified illnesses, and they are listed as questionable, according to the 49ers injury report.

Unlike the Pittsburgh Steelers and Baltimore Ravens, who had Thursday's game postponed until Tuesday, the Rams' game schedule has not been affected.

"My understanding is that we're kicking off," McVay said. "We're playing at SoFi at 1 and that's our plan."

McVay said the Rams would conduct a longer walk-through Saturday, much like they did in November 2018 when a Friday practice was canceled to enable players,

coaches and staff to deal with evacuations caused by fires in Ventura and Los Angeles counties. The Rams practiced at USC and, a day later, defeated the Seattle Seahawks.

Etc.

Tight end Tyler Higbee (elbow) will be a game-time decision, McVay said. Gerald Everett and Johnny Mundt will share snaps if Higbee does not play. Lewis (knee) is doubtful. "I'd be very surprised if he's available and ready to go," McVay said. ... 49ers guard Tom Compton is out because of a concussion.

CHARGERS REPORT

Defense burned for big plays and points

BY JEFF MILLER

The Chargers allowed 28 or more points eight times in **Gus Bradley's** first three seasons as defensive coordinator.

On Sunday, they'll attempt to avoid giving up at least 28 for the eighth game in a row.

In this most offensive of NFL seasons, the Chargers have become entangled in a league-wide scoreboard assault.

"You understand there's a lot of points being scored," Bradley said. "But we're not lowering our standard."

Entering Week 12, NFL teams were averaging slightly less than 25 points per game, the highest mark in league history. The week then began Thanksgiving Day with Houston and Washington both topping 40.

The Chargers yielded an average of 19 points through the first three weeks, before this seven-game stretch in

which the opposition is scoring 31 per game. The defense's inability to make crucial stops is one of the main reasons the Chargers are 3-7 and last in the AFC West.

"It's hard for me to give into that," Bradley said of the trend toward increased scoring. "It just feels like we've given up a lot of explosive plays compared to other years."

The most obvious example came Oct. 4, when Tampa Bay's **Tom Brady** burned the Chargers for four completions of at least 28 yards — all in the second half — in a 38-31 Buccaneers win.

"We're giving up big plays at critical times, times when we can get off the field," Bradley said. "We're just not making those plays."

The Chargers are 24th in the NFL in points allowed. They ranked in the top 10 in Bradley's first two seasons and finished 14th a year ago.

They've given up 273 points, and 60% have come after halftime. That helps ex-

plain how the Chargers have lost five times when leading after two quarters.

On Sunday, Bradley's bunch will face a Buffalo team averaging 27.2 points, 11th best in the NFL.

Being at home and returning from their week off, the Bills should be eager to play since they lost their previous game on a last-second Hail Mary pass at Arizona.

Buffalo's offense features athletic quarterback **Josh Allen**, who has thrown for 2,871 yards and 21 touchdowns. At 6 foot 5 and 237 pounds, he's also the Bills' second-leading rusher.

"He doesn't run like most quarterbacks," defensive end **Joey Bosa** said. "He's going to put his shoulder down and try to run right through you. So you have to be ready for that."

Ingram back to IR

The Chargers placed defensive end **Melvin Ingram** on injured reserve Friday because of a lingering knee prob-

lem, continuing his tough season.

This is Ingram's second stint on IR. He missed three games because of a knee injury starting in late September.

In the final year of his contract, Ingram has 10 tackles, four quarterback hits and zero sacks. He had his third career interception in the opener at Cincinnati.

With **Uchenna Nwosu** (shoulder/chest) also out, the Chargers will be thin at defensive end. Coach **Anthony Lynn** said **Jerry Tilley** and **Emeke Egbule** should play more as a result.

Tilley appeared on the injury report Friday with a groin problem, but he was able to practice. Egbule has been a regular on special teams. He has played defensively in only three games.

Hayward streak coming to an end

Cornerback **Casey Hay-**

ward's streak of 106 consecutive games will end Sunday because of a groin injury. No cornerback in the NFL had played more games in a row.

The team activated cornerback **Chris Harris Jr.** from IR, clearing his way to return.

Harris broke two bones in his foot during a loss to Carolina in Week 3.

Lynn also said cornerback **Brandon Facyson** is off the COVID-19 reserve list. Facyson's most recent game came Nov. 1 at Denver.

More injury updates

Running back **Kalen Ballage** (ankle/calf) was limited in practice all week and is questionable for Sunday.

The Chargers' No. 1 running back, **Austin Ekeler**, is nearing a return from IR. Ekeler suffered a hamstring strain in Week 4. Although Lynn didn't rule out Ekeler, it sounded unlikely early in the week that he would play against the Bills.

U.S. picks up where it left off — dominating

The women shut out Netherlands in replay of 2019 World Cup final after long layoff.

USA 2
NETHERLANDS 0

BY KEVIN BAXTER

The last time coach Vlatko Andonovski saw his U.S. women's national team on the field together, COVID-19 was a growing danger, the Tokyo Olympics were on the horizon and Alex Morgan hadn't even planned her baby shower yet.

Since then, the virus has killed more than 263,000 Americans, the Olympics have been postponed and Morgan's daughter is nearly 7 months old. What hasn't changed in those 261 days is the U.S. team's dominance, which was on display again Friday in a one-sided 2-0 win over the Netherlands in Breda, Holland.

The win, on goals by Rose Lavelle and Kristine Mewis, was the 11th in as many tries under Andonovski and extended the team's unbeaten streak to 32 games. It came at the expense of a Dutch team that hadn't lost since the 2019 Women's World Cup final, which the U.S. also won, 2-0.

For Andonovski, whose start is the best by a coach in



DEAN MOUHTAROPOULOS Associated Press

ROSE LAVELLE (16) of the U.S. puts the ball between the Netherlands' Merel van Dongen (4) and Dominique Janssen to score the game's first goal.

national team history, it was like picking up where he left off in March. "Obviously, this was a strange year," he said. "But one thing that didn't change — and one thing will never change with this team — is the heart and the mind."

The kind of heart and mind that allowed players to persevere through the longest national team break in more than three decades. Some practiced by kicking a ball

against a wall. Others trained on a treadmill.

Mewis waited even longer for an opportunity to wear the U.S. jersey again, having gone nearly seven years between national team appearances. It fell to Andonovski, a former NWSL coach who selected Mewis with the first pick he had in the league's inaugural draft, to finally give her a second chance.

And she waited just 10 min-

utes to reward him, coming off the bench midway through the second half and running onto a split pass from Lynn Williams, deflating two defenders as she charged into the penalty area, then beating Dutch keeper Sari van Veenendaal with a low, left-footed shot from close range. Among the first teammates to congratulate her were Morgan, playing her first game since giving birth in May, and

Mewis' younger sister Sam — although Mewis said afterward she remembered little of the celebration or the goal.

"I think I blacked out," said Mewis, whose only other international goal came 2,722 days earlier, the longest gap ever for a U.S. player. "I was so nervous to shoot it. I just wound up and gave it the best I could. And then turning around and realizing what had just happened and seeing Sam and Alex running toward me was so special."

Lavelle, one of nine World Cup starters who also started in Friday's rematch, got her goal with four minutes left in the first half on a counterattack that began with Christen Press streaking up the center of the field. After drawing three defenders to her, Press pushed the ball out to the right wing for Lavelle, who settled it with her right foot, cut inside Dutch center back Dominique Janssen to create space, then blasted a left-footed shot from the top of the box just inside the far post.

Andonovski won't see his players in person again until 2021, by which time he hopes COVID is under control and Megan Rapinoe and Carli Lloyd are back. The hearts and minds, however, will remain unchanged.

"We're not a perfect team yet," defender Crystal Dunn said. "This is a great building block for us."

There will be blood. No, really, there will

Tyson and Jones vow violence tonight at Staples, though fight is billed as exhibition.

BY MANOUK AKOPYAN

Mike Tyson says he's ready to disable Roy Jones Jr. when the former boxing champions meet Saturday night. Jones says he's ready to die in the ring.

California State Athletic Commission executive director Andy Foster, however, says this is not a real fight, its judges won't score the scrap or announce a winner, knock-downs are not welcome and the exhibition will be stopped if it comes anything close to Hagler vs. Hearns.

Something has to give when Tyson and Jones mix it up for eight rounds at Staples Center in a pay-per-view event.

The 54-year-old Tyson and the 51-year-old Jones will bring a combined 116 professional wins and 105 years into the ring. The proceedings will unfold over eight two-minute rounds, with 12-ounce gloves and without headgear, and longtime referee Ray Corona will be policing the action. There even has been anti-doping testing for the match.

The event's producer, Ryan Kavanaugh, is a longtime Hollywood executive whose investment company Proxima Media is the majority owner of TikTok rival Triller. The social media platform reportedly paid \$50 million to broadcast the fight. Kavanaugh is not a boxing promoter, but he might as well be Don King waxing promotional poetic and hinting that the late '80s version of Tyson will be making a comeback.

"This is a real fight in every way. The word exhibition does not actually have a definition in boxing except that it's not going on a professional record," Kavanaugh said. "The gloves are slightly a little bit more padded, but it's like putting a roll of Kleenex in front of a moving truck. "When [the CSAC] says 'the fight is for fun' ... Tyson and Jones have made it clear it's not for fun. The referee is there to make sure no one gets killed, Tyson doesn't bite [Jones'] ear off or break his arm."

Foster wants the marketing dialed down a notch.

"I talked to Tyson and Jones at the same time and I trust that they are going to give me their word," said Foster, a former fighter who wants to guarantee safety for the quinquagenarians. "Let's be clear: I think they are going to hit each other some. I expect it to be a good, hard, boxing exhibition, but not like some kind of [real fight]."

Tyson is set to earn \$10 million and Jones will haul in about \$3 million. They are maintaining that their fight will be just as engaging as if they met at the turn of the century when they were on a collision course and four-division champion Jones was a heavyweight king as well.

"I do not know what you're talking about," Tyson said in response to Foster's statements. "What's not a real fight? You got Mike Tyson and Roy Jones. I'm coming to fight, and I hope he's coming to fight."

Jones (66-9, 47 knockouts) backed up Tyson (50-6, 44 KOs) after watching the former heavyweight champion unleash explosive workout videos all year.

"Who goes into the ring with the great, legendary Mike Tyson and thinks, 'Oh, this is going to be an exhibition?' " Jones said. "Twelve-ounce gloves? No headgear? Really? This is an exhibition? Come on, man. Be for real."

Tyson weighed 220.4 pounds and Jones stepped on the scale at 210 Friday at the downtown JW Marriott.

Three-time NBA slam dunk champion Nate Robinson and YouTube personality Jake Paul will fight in the six-round co-feature; former world champion Badou Jack will be featured as well.

The pay-per-view will launch Triller's live events business and Tyson's latest venture in the sports startup Legends Only League. Twenty-one cameras and a 300-person crew will document the event. A 16-episode docu-series preceded it.

Former boxers Christy Martin, Vinny Pazienza and Chad Dawson will score the bout remotely, and a "Frontline Battle Belt" will be awarded.