

TRANSCRIPTIONS



**Head Coach Kyle Shanahan
Press Conference – January 15, 2020
San Francisco 49ers**

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Opening comments:

“Morning guys. Injuries for today; [LB Kwon] Alexander will be limited, [RB Tevin] Coleman is full, [DL] Dee Ford will not practice today and [RB Raheem] Mostert is full. Go ahead.”

Any aggravation with Ford?

“No, same situation as last week.”

The Packers have been on an upward momentum swing. What has changed with them from the time you played them the last time to where they are now?

“They were a pretty good team before we played them last time. I think that game just got away from them with the turnover to start and things like that. They played the same way they played all year. They just had one bad game. They have been a tough team offensively and defensively all year and done a good job not turning it over and their defense has kept people from scoring.”

How do you keep the guys focused from thinking that is where the norm is for them and getting them ready to be up for this game?

“It's not too hard because the guys will see tape on them from the whole year. And even if you go back and watch our game, that was much more competitive than the score looked. You get 38 points and things like that, but you go to some of the turnovers that happened, some big plays, but it was a lot harder of a game than it seemed and all the other games that you watch on tape, it looks like you're playing a really good team and it looks like you're playing a team that has the record that they do.”

The story you told about CB Ahkello Witherspoon the other day and everybody stepping up, how much of that is something you've really instilled and how much of that is the character of the guys you have on the team?

“It's something you talk about a lot. It's your goal. But, you can't just talk people into being that way. They've got to actually be that way. The guys are extremely competitive, everyone wants to help and contribute, but I think it has to do with our team really likes each other. I know how close Ahkello and [CB Emmanuel] Moseley are and how much they all respect each other. Our team I feel like is as tight of a team I've been on and I think that's what helps us in situations like that.”

Have you made a decision at right cornerback?

“Yeah, I've got a pretty good idea, but not going to tell you guys until I have to, which I never will, so someone else probably will.”

In terms of what you saw out of Dee Ford coming back last week, how did that affect how the Vikings tried to block you guys and how did that free up the pass rush for the other guys?

“I think you guys could probably notice the same thing that Minnesota noticed. Just his get-off on the edge opens up a lot of spots for everyone else and for himself and then you put him inside and you can do some different games and things like that. Dee Ford is explosive and knows how to get to the quarterback and the more out there, whether they get the stats or not, helps everyone else.”

Did you make a conscious decision maybe that TE George Kittle wasn't going to be as focused on in that game, and do you go into games sometimes making a decision like that on him?

“No, not really with guys personally. I always watch the team we're going against and how they play and how they try to win and then we think of what we have to do to not allow them to do that. So, we knew going into that game it was going to be hard to beat that team without getting a bunch of runs in and we were able to stick with it with the way the defense played and how good our tight ends are at blocking and stuff and how good we did on third down just allowed us to stick with it. It's just nice that, not that I would listen, anyways, but we've got a bunch of guys that are focused on the right things. They're not worried about stuff that doesn't matter. They are all out there trying to win the game and it's pretty nice as a coach you don't have to deal with guys coming up to you throughout the game, get me involved here, get me involved there. Our guys just want to win and we've done that a lot of different ways and we've done that running the ball, we've done it throwing the ball, we've done it on special teams, we've done it on defense. I think we've done it every way possible this year and I think our players have really bought into that.”

You said Kittle never suggests pass plays, but he suggests run plays. Does he suggest good run plays and do you follow his advice?

“The run plays he suggests are kind of half-thoughts. They are more to how he can hit someone. Let me go get this guy and then I've got to figure out what run play allows him to do that. He knows his run spot and I've got to think of how to tie that into all 11.”

When you say the guys like each other, T Joe Staley was saying the same thing after the game the other night and he was saying how unusual he felt it was given his other experiences. You've been with a lot of teams. Does this team have a different vibe?

“Yeah, I think it definitely does. That was something that I felt a little bit when we went on a run in Atlanta with our team. Something that we've been trying to establish here. I felt like we had that a lot better than I expected in the first couple years, and it didn't result in winning, which was always disappointing. But, that's something we always talked about, man we've got the right guys, they won't stop working, they don't point fingers and you

know when you go 4-12 every place usually does do that. It said a lot about our guys. Sometimes we almost worried, does that mean we need some worse guys, because we are not winning. But, we stuck with it. We brought in a few guys who thought the same way as our other guys and some difference makers with the pass rush and some guys on offense, too. I feel like our team has been this way since the beginning and when you do that and you win, it only gets stronger.”

You go from 4-12 to the NFC Championship Game in less than a year. How much of a springboard was essentially trading a year of reps for QB Jimmy Garoppolo for DL Nick Bosa?

“It's definitely helped. Everything happens for a reason, and you need to get good players in, some difference-makers, and Bosa has definitely been a difference-maker. I'm very glad we have him. I don't wish 4-12 on anybody, but after going through it, it was nice what it brought us.”

Your time in the league, just about Green Bay Packers QB Aaron Rodgers and his ability to bounce back, obviously that game that you guys had in November probably didn't go the way he wanted, but what have you learned about him and just the way he can respond in situations like that?

“That he can make a throw in any situation. He's never out of the game. I think we were up 23-0 at halftime versus him and he made it 23-8 after his first drive. It's 23-8 halfway through the third quarter, and I think it's a tight game because of who is over there at quarterback. We were fortunate enough, I think, the next drive to get the big play to Kittle which made it 30-8 and then it kind of got away, but Aaron is as good of a player who has played this game, he can make every single throw. He's got a lot of players around him and there's a reason he seems to be in this game a lot.”

Following up on that, you've worked with quarterbacks for a long time and probably watched them differently than everybody else. What element of his game do you think has allowed him to play at this level at 36 or whatever age he is now?

“There's probably not anyone on the planet who throws better than him. There might be a couple guys that you can compare with him, but his arm talent is just unbelievable, his athletic ability is unbelievable. He's always been able to run around, extend plays, make throws from any angle and he's a very intelligent guy who can get them in the right play and it's hard to throw stuff at him that he's not prepared for.”

You mentioned the Warriors a couple times a couple days ago. You're a sports fan. Is there anything you picked up from them? Did you watch them closely about how that run went?

“I wouldn't say in particular. I just have always been a fan of them and even before I got here just watching how they play. I remember saying in Atlanta even when we were there that I wanted our receiver group to be similar to the Warriors to where who knows who the starter is, they can all play. Andre Iguodala, things like that, I think he wasn't the starter and then he's the Conference Finals or whatever it's called, the NBA Championship, MVP, the seven games that mattered at the end. So, I mean, you think of stuff like that and that stuff, you've got an MVP, you've got a defensive MVP, guys who seem really not to care

how it gets done. They all just go out there and ball and see where the weakness in the defense is, and wherever that ends up, that guy shoots and that's a lot how I see offense."

Joe Staley has been honest about nearly retiring right in that range when you got here. How much has it meant to the team to have a guy like that buy in and become a leader?

"It means a lot just because of how good of a player Joe is, and he would say some of that stuff early on, it always surprised me because I always go off the tape and he didn't look like a guy who should be considering retirement. I thought he looked as good when we got here as he ever had and I think he looks even better now. That always surprised me, but I think Joe really loves football and I don't think he wasn't having that much fun. It's never fun when you aren't winning and that's what was hard for me. I thought he did buy in, and to start out 0-9 and watch his frustration with that. He kept doing it the right way and then to go 4-12, Joe can play and his body is good, but I think guys do get sick of losing and stuff but I think he's having a lot of fun playing now, I think he always has, but with how good the team is around him and stuff, you'd have to ask him, but hopefully he's not thinking about that as much anymore."

It was very early in your coaching career, but do you have any recollections about the 2005 draft and how it shook out with Aaron falling as far as he did?

"Yeah, I remember."

What was your take on how the process played out?

"I was a quality control coach in Tampa Bay. They only asked me receiver questions at that time (laughter)."

You coached a game against your dad in Houston when he was in Denver in the regular season. What was that like and what do you think it will be like for the LaFleur's on this stage?

"It's always a little bit different just because of how close you are with the other person. I know [Green Bay Packers head coach] Matt [LaFleur] and [passing game coordinator] Mike [LaFleur] are as close as any brothers could be just like most people are with siblings, but it really doesn't matter. There's a lot of talk to it and stuff, but I mean, there's no feeling when that game goes on, there's no feelings when you're studying and preparing. Everyone cares about the other person. I know if we weren't in it, I know he'd be pulling for his brother just like when I wasn't going against my dad, I was always pulling for him. But, I know when you go against each other, that stuff doesn't matter. Everyone's got a job to do and everyone is pretty competitive and wants to win, also."

A couple weeks ago, you said that WR Kendrick Bourne reminds you of your son who I believe is nine years old.

"Just turned 10."

Could you elaborate?

"I didn't mean that as an insult. I meant it was a compliment, as KB, I heard claimed because I love my son. I just meant that as in he's very innocent in a lot of things. He's

just very upbeat. The way you guys see him make a great catch in a game, in a Divisional playoff game that's a diving catch over the middle and a huge, pressure situation and the way he gets up and does his dances and stuff, it's like, how is the pressure not getting to him. It's because that's exactly how he looks on Wednesday. I bet you that's exactly how he woke up out of bed today when he probably ate Fruit Loops and watched cartoons. The guy is just the same all the time. The pressure doesn't get to him and he's fun to be around."

Can you say the same thing about WR Deebo Samuel?

"Similar. All those guys, they are football players who play like men out there in terms of their physical. They are not scared of the moment. But, they also remind you a lot that they are kids, too, and they are kind of in that spot where I feel like I just, I turned 40 about a month ago so I feel like I just left the kid area, also. I think all of us have got a lot of youth in us, but those guys got more than the others."

Do you feel like Garoppolo doesn't get the credit he might deserve even though he's continued to win?

"That's just how this world works and you'll get credit if you win a Super Bowl or an NFL MVP or something like that. We ran the ball last week, so a lot of people are going to say that Jimmy didn't do enough. There's lots of games this year that we haven't been able to run the ball and we've had to win it by passing. That's what I'm proud of with Jimmy and proud of our team, that you can't really say that we have to win a game a certain way. I think we've shown that we can win a number of ways, which shows a lot to our players and I know Jimmy doesn't care how we win it, whether we're running it, throwing it, whether we've got to do it on defense and protect the ball, or whether we've got to air it out and get some points. A lot of guys say that it doesn't bother them, but I promise it doesn't bother them. I've never had to call him in and talk to him about it, he's so locked into whatever the plan is or whatever we're doing, and he's just trying to distribute the ball."

There's so much history with this franchise. How have you been able to embrace it and to maybe draw from the history of the legendary 49er teams?

"I think it helps with the age I'm in, I was born in '79, so I remember the Niners throughout the 80s growing up and I was here with my dad in '94 where they won that Super Bowl. I think just being around it I knew exactly how special it was. But, I think people from my generation, also, when they think of teams, the big-time teams, it was the Niners, the Cowboys, you've got baseball, you've got the Yankees and the Red Sox and from growing up with me, basketball, it was always the Bulls, a little bit before the Celtics, but Detroit. I think you have those teams and that's what the Niners have always been. You know, been a few down years, I think since '12 or whenever it was, but that does happen, too. We knew we had to build this up and get back here, but we knew how good of an organization it was and when you do have a good organization, usually those tough times don't last. If you can just stay the course and be a little bit patient."

You have a few key players on the team who came via trade. I know every trade is

different, but generally, what would you say about general manager John Lynch's ability to get you some of the players that you really needed?

"I mean, John and his staff have been unbelievable. When we came here, we knew we had to go get some. There were a lot here to start with that have worked out very well, but we also knew we had a lot of hard work in front of us. John and his staff have presented all this stuff and got us a ton of guys, and it's been great because even the big key ones that everyone knows about have made a difference. Also, we've had a lot of injuries this year too where a lot of guys have had to step up, and our depth has really been challenged this year and I think it's a credit to our personnel staff."

In retrospect, what did the WR Emmanuel Sanders trade do for the offense as a whole?

"It gave us a big pick-up when we needed it. Emmanuel came in and allowed, I think, most importantly, our other receivers to grow. I don't know how ready all those other guys were quite yet and Emmanuel came in and took a lot of pressure off the guys right away. His first game was Carolina and I think his second was Arizona where he probably had his best game there versus Arizona, at least statistically, and during that time it took pressure off the other guys and allowed those guys to get a lot better, too. It's been great having Emmanuel in there, where guys like Deebo and Bourne can watch him because I think since he's gotten here, those guys have gotten a lot better."

Do you get the sense that the rest of the team feeds off the energy that Kendrick and the receiver group exudes?

"Yeah, I do. Those guys are like that all the time. They do it at practice. They do it on game day. I think our team feeds off the whole team whether it's our offense feeds off the defense and special teams, and our defense feeds off the special teams and offense. So, it all goes hand-in-hand. We've got, like I keep saying, a real close group and position groups or which side of the ball you're on it really doesn't matter."

At this point in the season, do you have any off-field concerns with the distractions that are potentially out there? Anything concern you off the field that you're going through right now?

"In terms of what?"

Just in terms of media, players, how they handle it.

"Our players have handled it pretty good all year. I know by this background and these helmets next to me there's a lot more dog and pony show and stuff, but hopefully our players know it's just Wednesday like it's been all year and tomorrow will be Thursday."