

TRANSCRIPTIONS



**Head Coach Kyle Shanahan
Press Conference – January 7, 2020
San Francisco 49ers**

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Opening comments:

“Feels like an introductory press conference. Injuries: we’ve got [LB Kwon] Alexander limited, [DL Dee] Ford limited, [OL Mike] Person limited and [DL Kentavious] Street limited.”

So, S Jaquiski Tartt is full?

“Yes, he’s full-go.”

What about activating Alexander? Is that going to happen this week?

“He’s got a good chance.”

What has changed from a standpoint of the timing to have him in this position where he could possibly play?

“I was told long ago that maybe there was an outside chance he could be ready for the Championship Game. That’s what I’ve gone with in my mind. Kwon has been trying to get back since the day after he was hurt. He’s been trying to prove us wrong on that. He’s more ahead of schedule, a week ahead of schedule than we anticipated. He’s been cleared by the medical staff. Now it’s just about how he looks out on the field, things like that. We’ll have a padded practice tomorrow that will help give us a little bit better idea.”

In other words, it’s now a coaching decision?

“Now it’s a coaching decision, yes.”

If he does come back, does he go right back to weak side or do you ease him in some way into the mix?

“Probably won’t decide that until kickoff.”

What is his greatest impact in this particular matchup?

“Kwon is a very good linebacker. He runs and hits. He’s smart in our defense. The energy you guys see him walk around and live his life by is the energy that he brings on the football field, too. Our team loves him. We’re fired up when he’s out there and he’s a good player also.”

Your admiration for Minnesota Vikings QB Kirk Cousins has been well

documented. Why did you guys click in those two years in Washington? What about him as a young player made such an impression on you?

“Just how efficient he was coming out of college, just watching him on film. Then being with him for four years, knowing how talented he was as a thrower. Being with him for four years, just his mind and how he worked on it and how he understood everything that was happening, whether it was good or bad. When you’re like that you know they can learn some things.”

What is the most outstanding thing about his development since you’ve left?

“I mean, I think he's been the same. I think he's always just steadily climbed. Every time he's gotten more opportunities, he's only gotten better. I know when he's had bad games, he's always learned from them, come back and respond. I think he's been given the right opportunity. Whenever he's been given the right opportunity, I think he's shown people he's one of the better quarterbacks in this league.”

You said last week you're optimistic about Tartt and Dee ford. Do you still have that optimism for Dee?

“I do, yes.”

How are you going to look at the cornerback position? Are you going to evaluate with CB Ahkello Witherspoon and CB Emmanuel Moseley, kind of back and forth the next couple days?

“Yeah, I’ve got a pretty good idea which way we're learning towards. It's not a big difference to me. I know it is to them because I know both of them want to get out there so bad. I think we’ve got two guys that I feel very confident both of them helping us win. Whoever starts, it will be based off of who we think gives us the best chance on Sunday.”

Having won in New Orleans last month, you have an understanding of what type of confidence that can give a team. How much confidence did that give you guys and how much confidence are you expecting the Vikings to have gained from that?

“I mean, any time you beat a good team, it gives you a lot of confidence, especially when you do it in a tough place like down there. But, I thought it gave us a lot of confidence, for whatever that means, and we came back and lost the next week. So, I don't know what that means. What means is how good we play on Saturday and how good they play on Saturday.”

TE George Kittle and other players talked about QB Jimmy Garoppolo’s leadership. We don’t always see him barking at everyone. What do you think his style of leadership is? What kind of leader do you think he is?

“I think he's a very good leader because he's himself and people respect how he plays. Jimmy doesn't change. Whether he's doing really good or really bad, or whether he has a bad day or good day, he's going to treat everyone the same. He's always the same guy, the same friend, the same teammate. He works the same regardless. I think just the way he talks to guys. He doesn't sit there and talk down to people. That's not really his style to ride people. But, he also has a way of holding people accountable by being himself, too. That stuff only works if you work and also they respect how you play. Jimmy has

earned that respect how he's played, he's earned it how he's worked. I think the guys really appreciate him as a man."

What influence has Minnesota Vikings assistant head coach/offensive advisor Gary Kubiak had on your career and what influence has he had on the Vikings?

"Gary has been huge on my career. I think everyone knows how long he was with my dad. I knew Gary when I was younger, being a ball boy, which probably wasn't a good first impression for myself to him. I started in the NFL out of college with [Oakland Raiders head coach] Jon Gruden, then I went to Gary who gave me my first position job as a receiver coach, the first coordinator job two years later. Gary was awesome. You're always a product of your environment. I always loved Gary as a human and a person, which he's off the charts with. That's why players love him, that's why coaches love him. It was great for my football acumen just to go there, especially following Tampa. It was two extremes being with someone like Jon Gruden who does every play known to man and you have so much scheme, which was awesome. You learn it all. Then you went to Gary who believed less is more. Not having as much. You come from one extreme and that's all you know and then you go to the other and it's totally different. Then you're like well that can't work because this is what I know. Then you start to realize the pluses and minuses of both. It helps you develop your own opinion on what it is. The two people I started out with were both two very good offensive coaches who were completely different, which I think really helped me."

How about what he's done for the Vikings? Have you seen his influence when you watch them?

"Yeah, you can see it all over. I mean, the run game, the pass game, the style of how they call it, down and distance-wise. It's extremely similar."

G Laken Tomlinson seems to be a very unsung guy. Not much is discussed or written about. Has he exceeded your expectations since you got him in a trade and then personality-wise, how would you describe him off the field?

"I mean, we were big fans of Laken coming out of college. He was in a situation, Detroit, where he didn't get to play a ton. Didn't always feel like it fit him the best. You never know until you get someone. We felt very fortunate with being able to get a talented guy like Laken when we did. I think it was a sixth-round pick at the end of training camp. He came in and played well for us his first year. I thought he played even better last year. I'm not surprised by how he's playing this year because he works at it, he has the ability to do it. Therefore, he keeps getting better. Laken is a very smart guy. He's very by the book. He's going to do everything you ask, he's going to work on it, not make mistakes. He's a really good guy."

Along the lines of what you were saying about what a small community it is and how things can overlap, when you're facing a player that you've coached before, is that stuff overrated or are there quirky things you know that person does or do you watch them evolve over a period of time since you've had that person?

"I think it's overrated. It's not overrated if the guy doesn't have much tape out on him because everyone is just trying to guess. You can talk a lot better than people who just

guess. Kirk has so much tape on him. I haven't been with Kirk, I only coached Kirk for like three games. I was with him for two years, but other guys were playing. But also, I'm not sitting there going against Kirk. So, I think that stuff is totally overrated. He's been a lot of places, he can do a lot of things that I don't know about. That will be between [defensive coordinator Robert] Saleh and our defense trying to stop him.”

What makes their safety tandem so good?

“The scheme they play in is very good. It puts a lot of pressure on them, but allows them to make a lot of plays, too. [Minnesota Vikings S] Harrison [Smith] has been there for a while. Then [Minnesota Vikings S Anthony Harris] 41, I did not see him the last time, but he's come in and been very impressive. He's got the ball skills. They both run and hit. They've got very sound coverages with linebackers underneath and stuff. There's not always a ton of pressure on them that allows them to just run, make plays in the run game by being physical and allows them to be some ball hawks, too.”

How much did Robert consult with you as far as budgeting his time last week with the interview? How do you think he handled that situation with the Browns?

“Saleh was fine. We had time off. It just works out. It was great getting the Bye week. It wasn't an issue at all. When all of us had a couple off days to rest with our families, Saleh was in here working for an interview. No, I mean, you have to ask them. Pretty confident how Saleh did. Saleh is well prepared for that type of stuff. He's unbelievably impressive. If anyone sits down and interviews him, just like he was when I did, if that's what they're looking for I know they were going to be pumped with what they saw.”

Going down memory lane a bit, it's 1994, you're a 49ers ball boy a freshman at Saratoga High School, what do you remember about that time in your life and that season at Saratoga?

“I remember people making fun of me because I got [former NFL CB] Deion Sanders' throwback jersey for Christmas and I didn't take it off until the day after the Super Bowl when my dad became the Broncos head coach. So, I wore it for however many days that is, a month and 10 days. I changed my undershirt, though, I promise. No, I was dedicated. I felt like I couldn't do school for that month because I had to get a good night's sleep to get ready for the games and things like that. I was 100-percent the Niners and the playoffs at that time. I can remember it like it was yesterday. It's funny to watch my wife be like that kind of right now and my kids are getting there, not as old as I was, but they're getting close.”

With all the passing stats and analytics that are available, what are the ones that matter to you and the ones that you look at Jimmy's season and say this is why he's having a good year?

“I'd probably embarrass myself if I sat up here and talked too much stats because I guarantee you guys know them better than me. I just watch every play. I kind of just have a pretty good feel on whether he's playing good or not. I think one of the biggest things in all of football is third down. There's not much you can do on third down. There is stuff you can do scheming and everything, but not if you don't have a really good quarterback. I think that's always a pretty apparent stat to me. That's not foolproof, there's been lots of

really good quarterbacks who their team hasn't been good on third down. I think you just look at both teams. We're both very committed to running the ball, but you look at third down. If you take out all runs on third down, we're number one in the league and Minnesota is number two. So, you've got two teams who run the ball, but that also shows you've got two quarterbacks."

RB Raheem Mostert is a self-described beach bum. Are you surprised by that given the way he plays the intensity he plays with on special teams and with the way he runs the ball, kind of balancing his personality?

"If I just saw him on the football field I would be surprised because you don't think of many running backs as being big surfers. I'm with him every day and I get to talk with him and stuff so it doesn't surprise me the way he talks hanging out with him. He's from Florida, which surprises me, because usually I feel like the surfers are from California. I know there's some waves down there, too. I think it's been cool. He got a Billabong sponsorship a couple months ago. He's enjoying it and has probably my favorite dance he does, too."

Knowing how well they play against the run, what are some of the keys you guys have to do? Is it a matter of just sustaining the run game, committing to it, or is there certain things you have to do because they're strong up front?

"It's a little bit of everything. Everybody wants to commit to the run and stuff. Committing to the run isn't just committing to the run. Players laugh at me a lot because I always say, 'Do you guys want to run the ball?' Yeah. You better be able to throw it then. If we want to throw it, you better be able to run it. You don't just run the ball and get 40 runs by calling run-run-pass because you're going to be in some third-and-eights. You're not going to do that good on third-and-eight. You have to mix it up, you've got to do things. How does the defense play? How good do you do on third down? Are we getting some explosive runs? Eventually if you just get five yards here and there every time, that's great, but are you going to get points. All that stuff goes into it. You can't give a good answer for that because there's variables within the entire game that usually leads to who has the most run carries. Usually the team who has the most run carries wins so you try to get the most run carries. But, the answer isn't just calling run every play."

What progress have you seen WR Deebo Samuel make over the course of his rookie season? Has his added experience toward the end of the year allowed you to do more with him and the offense?

"Yes. Deebo's allowed us to do more each week. Going through the whole year, receivers, the style of game in college, there's not as much man-to-man, it's a lot more fast tempo. There's huge zones with where the hashes are. It is very hard to get good at route running, especially when you've got some of these guys who are pretty talented with the ball in their hands. Working on the routes so much in college is kind of a waste of time. They're just going against zone, just get them open in the zone, have them run. It's almost like a fastbreak basketball. When you get that, guys are sloppy a little bit on their routes, which Deebo was because he didn't have much experience. For him to play all year like that and to get better each week, even battling through some injuries, it's been great. Says a lot about him as a man. That's where he's improved the most."

Jimmy has never started a playoff game. What will determine his success or failure in that new environment?

“How good he plays and how good everyone plays around him. That stuff is so funny to me because he could play great and we might come up short. People will want to say he can't win a playoff game. I felt like last week was a playoff game. That was pretty intense. Or whenever we played Seattle. I think he's shown he can handle himself in poise. He's played some really good games. Just like everybody, hopefully he does it this Saturday, which will be his first playoff game. But, I think Jimmy has played in some pretty big games. Anyone who is around him in those games and talks to him and stuff it's not much different in those games with him as a preseason game. He stays pretty much the same.”

You went through the interview process, coming here, in the playoffs, there's obviously some inherent disadvantages to your team continuing to win for some coaches, advantages for others, some inherent distractions. How do you feel about the whole process overall? Is there a better way?

“You're talking about with having a Bye week and stuff?”

Having to wait until your team is eliminated to get hired.

“Oh, that part. Yeah, I think it's tough. I don't necessarily have a better way. I think it's real tough. There's so much turnover, this is the time for jobs for a lot of people in this league. But, it's not for how many teams are left, however many there is. People can't do much about that. I think it's less on the head coach. I think it's more on all the position coaches who are sitting and waiting. Usually the guy who is going to become head coach and stuff, it's going to be all right. It's kind of tough when you have all the other guys on the staff and their families who are kind of in limbo. Should they be looking hard for another job, waiting? That's the toughest thing.”