

TRANSCRIPTIONS



**Head Coach Kyle Shanahan
Press Conference – December 24, 2019
San Francisco 49ers**

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Opening comments:

“I don’t have to talk about injuries today, so I’m not going to. I’ll talk tomorrow. Go ahead.”

Is S Jaquiski going to practice today?

“I don’t have to talk about it today. I’m not giving them a day ahead of us, so legally, I’m allowed to not talk about it until tomorrow. You guys can guess when you watch individual or stretch.”

It’s supposed to be a big game, right?

“I mean, this is the first time that I’ve had eight days and the other team has seven, I think. It’s not about the game. This is the first time we’ve been in this situation. We’re practicing on a Tuesday and we’re playing on a Sunday, which we normally don’t do. Since we have Christmas this week, we’re going to have that as a bonus day. [Vice president of communications] Bob [Lange] let me know that rule, so I’m going to take advantage of it.”

So, the rule is, even if you do practice, you don’t have to--?

“Yeah, we don’t have to give a designation until Wednesday. If he’s wrong on that rule, he’s paying my fine.”

Is QB C.J. Beathard back with the team?

“No, he’s not. I talked to him yesterday. They’re still working through a lot of stuff, obviously. C.J., I told him definitely, he didn’t ask, but I told him make sure he doesn’t come back this week. He’s got to be out there with his family and stuff, especially with Christmas this week. Whenever he’s ready is when is the time he should come back, whenever that is.”

This is more of a roster-type question, but would the NFL allow like a Commissioner’s exemption for such a thing if you needed that roster spot?

“I don’t know. I’m not sure. Yeah, I don’t know. You could ask them for me, though. I would appreciate that.”

How did he seem to be doing?

“As good as you can be. He was strong and tried to tell me the information that’s going on out there, what they’re working through and trying to find the messed-up person who did this. I think that’s their main focus right now.”

What was your reaction when the Seahawks signed RB Marshawn Lynch?

“Not much. I saw the backs they lost, so you knew they were going to sign someone. They signed a good one. I know Marshawn will come in and he’ll be ready regardless of how much time he’s had off. Marshawn’s a competitor, he’s a battler, so I think it was smart of them.”

They obviously have Seattle Seahawks RB Robert Turbin and Marshawn, neither of whom have played football in a year. I realize you understand what Marshawn’s done, but what kind of challenge is that and how unique would it be if they were able to actually do well in this game?

“It is a huge challenge. It depends on how much those guys have been working out and stuff like that. I do think it’s a little different with the running back position. There’s a lot that goes into people understanding the scheme and the game plan and everything, but you can use a running back a lot easier just depending on if you’re handing him the ball and he needs to run. So, you can get guys up to speed a lot faster in that way. The rest will be how much they’ve worked out, which keeps them in shape. No one’s in football shape. I don’t think those guys are planning on any single guy just carrying the load the whole game. The football shape and how they react will probably be more of an issue for them the next week than the first week.”

How much emphasis this week do you put on managing the emotions of your team leading up to this game?

“A little bit. You know how excited everyone is, you know how excited they’re going to be. This is definitely a week you don’t have to try at all to get your team up for the game. It’ll be the same thing for them. Just the times I’ve been in this situation in the past, it’s extremely fun to coach. You have everyone’s attention, everyone is completely into it. No stone goes unturned by anyone. You don’t have to push anyone on that. Everyone’s going to be locked in and that’s all you can do. That’s what you try to tell guys. You’re going to be excited to play, you’re going to work as hard as you can, that’s all you can control. Be prepared and then just cut it loose.”

What was it about DL Anthony Zettel that made you make that roster move?

“Just I know our personnel department really liked the tape he’s put out. I know [defensive line coach Kris] Kocurek had a history with him. Just with some of the injuries we have there and stuff, we have been looking for some more depth and everything. With our personnel department liking him and Kocurek having a history, it was a pretty easy decision.”

Obviously, a lot is at stake for both you and the Seahawks this week, but how important is it for a West Coast team to avoid having to play three straight road playoff games back to back?

“I’ve seen it go every way. I’ve seen teams clinch homefield advantage and have a Bye week and I’ve seen that completely backfire on that team. I’ve seen people have to win three in a row the hard way and they rally together and they just do it. You never know what should’ve happened until the end of it. I do know, though, if I had to pick, I would much rather only have to play two games than three games. That’s how we look at it, but besides that, it can go either way.”

You have played a few big games already to this point and you mentioned that you don’t have to do much to get the guys up for this one, but is there a challenge in keeping the message fresh or finding something new to say at this point in the season for a big game?

“No, I don’t think so. I don’t think I have to come up with anything. If I do, it’s very obvious I’m coming up with something. This situation is what it is. You guys know that. My wife knows it, my kids know it, all our players know it. Anyone who pays attention to football knows it. Everyone’s going to be amped up.”

How helpful is it to have a guy like CB Richard Sherman who’s been in so many big games and in a locker room with so many guys who haven’t been in that? How have you seen that kind of develop this year and going into this one?

“I think that’s huge. Players, coaches, anybody who has some experience, you always want to lean on people with experience. It doesn’t mean they’re always, everyone with experience, is the right guy to, but talking about Sherm and stuff, he’s very even keel in how he talks to these guys. He’s pretty wise in that area. I think it’s helped us throughout the year being able to talk to guys like that. When you start out, I forget how we started out, 8-0 or whatever it was, talking about how long the year is and that this doesn’t mean anything and what to expect 10 games from now and things like that. That’s where we’re at and people have been through that before. It’s been good to talk throughout the year and now we’re kind of in that situation that people have been in before, like Sherm and people. Now we’re in the exact situation we’ve been talking about for a while.”

Aside from the running back situation, how have the Seahawks changed since November 11th when you faced them?

“I don’t think much at all. I know the last couple of weeks they’ve had [Seattle Seahawks DE Jadeveon] Clowney out and I know their safety’s been out and their corner. Expect to get at least two of those back this week, so to me, they haven’t changed much at all on defense. And offensively, they’re missing their running backs, they’re bringing two new ones in and they don’t have their left tackle. It’s similar to how we played a ton of games this year. I know there’s a lot with injuries as there is with everyone, especially when they just happen, but I think that’s part of football and I don’t see a big difference in this game than the last game.”

How challenging is the first start in Seattle for a quarterback? What unique challenges will QB Jimmy Garoppolo face this Sunday?

“I think the main thing with Seattle is just to know how loud it is. Everyone’s played in loud stadiums and that’s usually the loudest. You’re not going to be able to hear. What I can say to Jimmy is it’ll be exactly like New Orleans was. I’ve been in New Orleans a bunch,

but New Orleans was different. The last time we were there was the loudest I've ever been anywhere. Last time in New Orleans was tied with how Seattle is, so it'll be very similar to that and I thought he handled himself well there and I expect him to do the same thing in Seattle."

He used a wristband with a numbering system. Do you use that only in the loud environments?

"No, we've been using it all year. Just allows us to be a lot more wordy and do a lot more things and not have to stress about it."

What do you see out of their defense? Historically the Niners have had trouble scoring up there so what is it about the scheme that carries over that makes it so challenging outside of the noise?

"I think one, over the 10-year span they've had as good of a 10-year run defensively as probably anyone in the history of football. I think everyone's struggled to score on them regardless. Then you add in the elements of their stadium and everything where you can't hear the cadence, they're built pass rush first and how much they get off and attack the quarterback. When you can't use cadence and you're going against a very skilled team with a pass rush that's extremely hard. Not to mention they've had a good quarterback that whole time who doesn't turn it over a lot, can always make the plays at the end. They've had kind of the perfect set up for a winning formula and I think that's why they've been as successful as any team over this decade."

I think there's only a couple guys on the team, maybe one active right now, who was there the last time you won in Seattle, but a lot of people in the building have been here during that whole time. Do you sense organization-wide, a frustration about not being able to win up there since 2011?

"No, I honestly didn't even remember that until I read his [vice president of communications Bob Lange] notes before I came in here so I was prepared for you guys to ask that. No, I don't think our team thinks like that. Our guys haven't been here that long. I don't think players get caught up in that stuff much. We know the team we're going against, we saw them earlier this year. We get to study them on tape and we know what it's like to play in a very tough environment and that's what it's going to be. We're playing a good team that we know well and we know it's going to be in a tough environment. What's happened in the past or what's going to happen in the future has nothing to do with the three and a half hours on Sunday."

Nothing about OL Daniel Brunskill's past coming into this year suggested he'd be good. At what point did you know? Was it training camp or was it not really until he had to start in a regular game?

"You start to notice in training camp just with how they move and stuff and how they get better each week. But, I understand the question because he was number 61 for me for a while, what is he now? Now he's 60, he was 61 in training camp though. Then you see they start to make more plays, you start to notice them. You bring 90 guys to OTAs, especially when the last place he was, was the AAF. I didn't study any AAF tape, we have our personnel guys who do that. They brought him in and he started to jump out. About

half way through OTAs, just the consistency. Everyone starts out bad, but then just how they get better. Guys have a certain skill set to have the ability to do it and that's what our guys look for. Then it usually comes down to what they're made of, how tough are they? How smart are they in terms of applying their mistakes and getting better from each thing? He was so much better in training camp than he was in OTAs and then we started to notice him in the games, not making mistakes and his guy didn't make the play much and when that happens our eyes notice him a lot more. That's why he ended up earning a spot on this team."

Lynch is obviously not in great football shape. But as a coach, can you imagine a scenario where if general manager John Lynch came to you and said, 'hey, X player is on the street. We need a guy like this. He's a legend. He's going to get the fans fired up. He's going to get the players fired up.' Is there any juice that a guy like that, even if he's not in shape, can provide for a team and a stadium to make a difference in a game like this?

"Yeah, to a degree, but no one is going to make a decision just off of that. If we could dress as many people as we wanted for a game, then we would, but I've lost two running backs before the game started before and had to go with one the whole game, just in pregame warmups. You can't just have guys out there for those reasons. I know they wouldn't have him out there if they didn't think he could be effective. You know he'll get everyone pumped up and things like that because of what he's done there for their fans. Once the game starts, then it's all about the game. He's a good player so when he makes plays, that will pump everyone up. That's what we've got to make sure to not let him do."

Seattle had a challenging game last week. How much do you take from that film and was it more fluky for that game?

"Not really. It was just like us versus Atlanta. Every game in the NFL is real hard to win. Very hard. Then you go against a team who's got some players on it, some speed. It looks like the defense slowed them down. They got a quarterback who can run around and make plays and when he went out, the other guy came in and did it. Every game in the NFL is tough, so I don't put much into that."

Jaquiski Tartt and DB Jimmie Ward have been teammates since high school. When they're on the field together, do you see that communication? Do you see that understanding between them and do they work well together?

"Yeah, I think Tartt likes to talk out there and communicate with everyone. I don't think it's because they went to high school together. I think it's like that with everyone out there. Jimmie is more of a silent assassin and Tartt is more of the communicator out there. [S] Marcell [Harris] is a little bit more of a silent assassin also, but the more he's out there, the more experience he gets, the more he does communicate. I think I've been noticing that each week getting better and better."

Has that been an issue?

"Anytime that there's a mistake in a game, that's why people motion and do all that stuff because you've got to run over there and change everything up when someone gets to a stack split and guys do have to communicate. Lots of the time, especially when it's at

home, you can't hear because their crowd is cheering when the defense is out there. Sometimes you've just got to know. Yeah, that always is an issue. It's not because one guy is doing really bad at it, but usually when something happens in the secondary, besides someone just getting beat in man-coverage, usually it's a communication issue."

Last time you played them without TE George Kittle and WR Emmanuel Sanders was out most of that game. With those guys back, what's the difference in your offense?

"We've got two guys who make a lot of plays. The more guys you've got out there who can make plays, the better chance it gives you. We're definitely pumped to have those guys back. I think our tackles are a lot healthier now also. We're missing our center, which is a huge loss. We'll see how it goes with [OL Mike] Person this week, but you never know. Each game is different with injuries and stuff. I know they've got some and we've had some throughout the year, but that stuff's not going to matter come Sunday."