

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

TRANSCRIPTIONS



Head Coach Kyle Shanahan
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San Francisco 49ers
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Can you address the three transactions you made? You brought in two receivers and then today the decision to release WR Bruce Ellington? I'm assuming those are all interconnected?

"Yeah, you know the first day when we actually lost [WR] BJ [Johnson III], he went down, we still hadn't decided how long he was going to be out. But, we knew we were down a little bit there. And then the fact, you know Bruce had done a good job with us but we had a bunch of guys who were very similar in their skill set. Kind of the same type of players and we had to get some different skill sets in. I thought give Bruce a chance to go somewhere else. He handled everything great. He's been a great person here in the short time we've been with him. He came back and battled from some tough injuries and gave himself a chance to go for a week, but you know we're a little too loaded at that spot. So, we wanted to get some different guys in here with some different skill sets and mix up the group a little bit."

When you talk about different skill sets, what exactly do you mean at that receiver position?

"You want fast guys, you want quick guys, you want tall guys, you want guys with great hands, guys who are quick, guys who can just flat out run. Different types of ability to use on certain plays. I thought we were a little front loaded with some more inside receivers, the slot-type position. We had a little bit of a back-up there, we're trying to get some other guys who can play a little bit more on the outside."

Did you intend to end practice with wind sprints or is that a function of maybe the chippiness that was going on?

"No, that was the plan. Yesterday we didn't move the ball for the first time, and I thought our team seemed in pretty good shape. When we did move the ball we went on a few long drives and I could see guys getting a little bit gassed. So, I thought we just had to condition a little bit more. It wasn't a punishment or anything. It just seemed like we needed it."

Are you okay with it being a little rougher today? It seemed like it was a little more physical?

"Yes, I was. I wanted them to turn it up a little bit. I believe it was our fourth day in pads, I think. I think guys are getting comfortable with it. We had a day off two days ago. I was

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trying to get the idea of how we want to practice, how to be physical, but still not take people to the ground. I thought they did a better job of that today.”

How did LB Reuben Foster look playing with the first team defense?

“He did solid. I’ll watch more when I see the tape. You know, we threw him at a different position today for the first time. Threw him at somewhat of a MIKE linebacker. We rested a number of our guys so it gave him some opportunities. I thought he did a good job. We just threw him in there and he started moving a lot. He’s got to make all the calls. I think like anybody in his first time at it, I think he had a few busts. I think there’s good stuff for him to get in and watch the tape and learn from.”

That was planned, that wasn’t because LB Brock Coyle went down in practice?

“No, we gave [LB NaVorro Bowman] Bo got this morning off so we were down one anyway at the MIKE position. So, we were going to move Reuben over there and let him run with the second team, get some MIKE reps, make some of the calls. It’s similar, the techniques and stuff they have to do, but the communication is different. So, we wanted to get him reps of that with the second team, and then Brock went down at practice so Reuben bumped up.”

Yesterday in practice, I know you guys have that defense isn’t allowed to take the runner to the ground, but RB Carlos Hyde kind of leveled CB Ahkello Witherspoon. Are you okay with Carlos doing that, and how is the defensive guy supposed to protect himself in those situations?

“Yeah, I was. There’s a fine line between that, and I didn’t mind it yesterday. I think Carlos taught him a little bit of a lesson that will kind of help him in the long run. It’s very tough for anybody when a guy gets, especially a guy like Carlos, there’s about 15 yards between him and Carlos and the guy’s getting a running start and you’re sitting there waiting on him. That’s going to happen. Especially if you’re not allowed to go at his legs. So, what I like is that Carlos kind of taught him that. So next time he doesn’t just sit there and take out his legs, he better recognize the cutback a lot faster. When the outside receiver cracks on the safety, you better replace that guy a lot faster. So now Carlos has about a three-yard head start instead of a 15-yard head start. I don’t care who you are, if Carlos gets a 15-yard head start on you and lowers his head and you’re not allowed to go low on him, that will be the end result. So, it’s about recognizing that crack and crack replacing. Getting right in the hip of that receiver and getting on Carlos before he gets that steam going.”

That collision shouldn’t have happened?

“Yes. And that does happen. It’s not just Ahkello. When receivers go out and dig out safeties that are coming down in eight-man fronts, now we’ve blocked the safety and we’ve gained a man so they have to gain a man. Now that corner, his receiver he’s guarding is blocking the safety so he’s got to shoot his guns and replace the safety. If you sit there and wait for a big guy to come to you, that’s going to be the end result. I think that was a good learning experience for Ahkello. I know it wasn’t fun, but hopefully he’ll appreciate Carlos for it in the long run.”

It looked like TE Vance McDonald also got into Ahkello at the goal line and bounced off of Brock and went in there. How is Vance McDonald's camp coming along and what is he showing the last few days?

"It's just been good to get Vance out there. We didn't have him much of OTAs and now to get him out there consistently every day, going on however many days we've had he's gotten used to the offense. He's kind of gotten the chance to put himself in position to make some plays. He was in and out of OTAs with a couple things that happened, so he was kind of spinning a little bit. Now to go through it, have a little bit more of the offseason to get away, come back here to meetings again and actually get some practice reps, I think he's gotten better each day the more he's gotten comfortable."

Some of the tight ends, do they do work before practice on their ball catching?

"Yes. We usually give all the position coaches about half an hour with the guys before practice. Most of the guys use it as meeting time and script review. [Assistant head coach/tight ends coach Jon] Coach Embree likes to go out there and get on the sled and do some extra work, stuff they don't really get. Tight ends, their individual time always gets taken from them because half the time they've got to go with the quarterbacks to work on the pass game. Then they've got to go with the O-Linemen to work on the blocking stuff. It's hard for them to really get their own time, so that's where Embree finds it."

Where's WR DeAndre Smelter now compared to when you first got him?

"DeAndre works as hard at knowing all the positions, knowing everything. He excels in the slot, but he's smart enough and works hard enough at it to run all three. He's a guy that I have a lot of confidence in whenever someone's down. It doesn't matter what position he's at, you know he's going to know how to do his job. He works at it, he's been working at it since he got here and when you do that for so long it becomes second nature, that gives you a chance to make more plays. I think the better you know your assignment, the better you get as a player physically. I think that's happened to him slowly, but he's coming along."

He's almost still kind of playing catchup from being in a triple option offense in college or is he settling in as a wide receiver?

"I think he's settling in as a wide receiver. We've worked with him on a bunch of routes and guys are never going to get better unless they are doing it all on their own too. We work with guys as hard as we can, but DeAndre is a guy who whether we're there or not he's out there, he's thinking about every single route, thinking about the steps, how to set guys different ways, how to run it differently versus coverages. He works at it as hard as anyone I've been around. That's why I feel like we're noticing he looks like a receiver."

What happened at the end of practice with that play? Was that one of the reasons why you wanted to end right there?

"No. I thought the play was over because it was third down and I thought they stopped us, and we ran out of room going that way. We don't really have an end zone on that side so I didn't want to run into the fence. But, I wanted to keep them out until the defense

stopped us. Then the ref called some type of penalty, I didn't really know what it was. I think he ended up calling a personal foul, so I was going to make the defense stay out there. So, I just had them re-huddle and I was going to make them go. Then the ref waived it off. I'm not sure exactly why, but it was NFL refs out there today. We have them for today and the next two days. So, I'm going to meet with them later, but once he waived it off I knew it was time for a field goal so I got the defense off the field."

I saw some red zone, some 11-on-11 today. In the past you've talked about situations, but this is a pretty long time to go without too much situational two-minute or even that last field goal. Is that then something that you say let's just get the base offense and the base defense in?

"I really believe you've got to set a foundation. That's why it was very important for us to go four days just setting the foundation of our offense, our defense and our special teams which is your first and second down, what's your bread and butter. When you get that down then you can venture to other areas. We've hit it all up in walk-through and stuff in the afternoons, which is more assignment based. I don't want to come out and start jumping into the red zone and things right away. I want to make sure we can get to the red zone first, and if we can get to the red zone then I want to focus on being good in the red zone. It's just a process. We've got it all mapped out. We plan it all out. We're going to get the same amount of time on all the stuff, it's just how do you go about it. I just believe in there's a process of teaching, and you want to start early and build your way up to that."

Why don't you have your quarterbacks with wrist bands?

"Why don't I? I think you'd have to ask other people why they have their quarterbacks use wrist bands. It depends. A lot of teams that I know of who their quarterbacks use wristbands it's because their play caller doesn't call the formation and doesn't say the whole play. They just say a number and put it on the quarterback to then look down and then he reads it to them. Those are most of the people that I've found out, but we don't need to do that. I just call the whole play and they repeat it. I don't just say '14,' I say the formation and the play and they read it. So, there's no need to look down and have a cheat sheet. They just have to repeat what they hear in their helmet. I really don't know the other reasons why people would have a wristband, but that's why we don't. If the headset ever went down, we would try to run one out to him very fast."

Do you get a sense that he hears the play and he can kind of visualize it before he spits it out?

"Yes, and it's quicker. I want him to get in the huddle together not looking down at his arm, and there's more than 10 plays. I don't want him to have to flip through a bunch of stuff, it takes time. We want to go as fast as we can. I want to say it, I want him to repeat it after me and get to the line of scrimmage. Sometimes when you put that on quarterbacks and you put more pressure on 'Hey here's the number, but if you're on the right hash you've got to say all this stuff the other way. You've got to say it left instead of right, you've got to say three jet instead of two jet, you've got to say 19 instead of 18.' In the heat of battle, sometimes that can get tough for a guy. It gets tough for a play caller

also, but if you're doing it all the time all week for most of your life you get better at it. I'd just rather a quarterback worry about all the hard stuff."

Do you script the first 15 or anything like that?

"Yeah, I've always scripted, I usually try to give an opening 24. But, I don't think ever in my life have I gone one through 24. You just try to give guys an idea of what the game plan is, where you plan on going with it. It's mainly more so players can feel comfortable with what the play caller's thinking so they can prepare. I always start out with the first play, and I usually go with the second play too. But, very quickly when you see what you're getting on defense, how they're playing, formations, how they're playing personnel groupings, after a series we might've just finished plays one through five but I'll tell the coaches, 'Hey we're skipping to 19. They're playing this differently and we want to get in this personnel group, we'll go there.' Then I might come back later to play seven. It just gives players an idea of how to prepare, kind of what you're thinking so they don't have to read your mind. But, by no means are we just going to stick with it and go, it's always set on what we're going against."

Being a head coach now, what's different?

"I've been enjoying it. It's fun to come to work every day, I always come in thinking to prepare for the meetings and put tapes together, and do stuff that I've been doing my whole career. But, you know stuff pops up and you've got to deal with some things that I haven't and I actually enjoy it. I think some of the hardest things for me as a position coach or coordinator is when you know stuff that's going on and you know you want to fix it but you're really not in a position to fix it and you've kind of just got to deal with it and internalize it. It's kind of enjoyable for me to come to work every day that if something's bothering me, regards to what it is, I can go talk to the person. I can address it. I can try to fix it and have a solution or I can realize you know what this isn't that big of a deal I can let it go. Just mentally and stuff, it makes it a little bit more fun knowing that you're in a better position to solve problems."

Do you consider using a wrist band when you play in Seattle where things can get extremely loud and over the headset maybe the quarterback might miss a few of the words in your call?

"Yeah. If they ever couldn't hear, that's what we'd have to do. I've played there a number of times and it's never been an issue."