

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

TRANSCRIPTIONS



**General Manager John Lynch & CB Richard Sherman
Press Conference – March 20, 2018
San Francisco 49ers
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Opening comments:

General Manager John Lynch: “Welcome everyone. [Head coach] Kyle [Shanahan] and I, we’d first like to apologize, our tailor worked long and hard, but they weren’t quite ready today so we’ll be donning our red suits later. But, proud and happy to announce [CB] Richard Sherman as a 49er. We’re thrilled to do this and we all know what he brings. He brings a championship pedigree, as I said, and an absolutely wonderful competitor that we wanted to surround his presence around our guys with. We’re thrilled to have you here, buddy. Take it over.”

CB Richard Sherman: “Very excited to be here. It was a tough decision. Obviously tough to leave what you know and what we had. But, things happen and you’ve got to move on. I’m thankful for everything that I had in Seattle and what those fans brought and what my teammates brought. But, I’m looking forward to moving on to a new chapter and helping this team win ball games. Obviously, the things that they did in the end of the season, the last five games were unbelievable. We hope to repeat that success in the upcoming year. [QB] Jimmy [Garoppolo] is a tremendous asset for this team and he played outstanding football, but there are a lot of young guys who I expect to have a leap from last year to this year and I’m looking forward to the challenge of growing with another group of men and bringing them back to the top.”

Did the 49ers, did John and Kyle, have to convince you that this was the right place for you?

RS: “No, no they didn’t. I wouldn’t have taken the visit first, if I didn’t feel comfortable with what they offered as a team, their chances at competing and winning in this football league. Obviously, I’ve been part of a lot of winning teams. I know what it takes and I know the formula and I think they have it here.”

From afar you’ve seen, I’m sure, kind of the dysfunction that’s been in this organization for several years, so what about this current incarnation of the 49ers makes you believe that this is a place that’s ready to win?

RS: “It’s John and it’s Kyle. They brought stability to this organization. They brought fun. They brought belief. They brought faith. The players believe they can win. The players believe in the staff. I think the staff, everybody that I’ve spoken to speaks very highly about everybody on the staff. Kyle is obviously innovative offensively and I’ve had a ton

of respect for the way he calls the game for a long time. We've played him since my rookie year, actually, when he was with Washington. He always gives us issues with plays that we've never seen, routes that we've never seen, concepts and then the rest of the league piggybacks on what he has and they're like, 'Oh my god, look at these great offensive coordinators.' It's like literally, they're just copying what this guy did against us for the past five games. So, congratulations, you can copycat. But, I really appreciate his offensive approach and defensively with [defensive coordinator] Robert Saleh, there's familiarity there. I've done well in his scheme. I've played well in the scheme. I know it like the back of my hand, the front of my hand. In terms of the distance from my family, I'm a west coast guy. I'm an L.A. guy, but I spent five years in the Bay Area going to Stanford, so I've won a lot of games wearing red."

For years and years, we've tried to get you on a conference call before Niner games and we were unsuccessful. Now we just had you on a conference call and you're back to talk to us again. Do you regret not talking to us before?

RS: "You guys got me on a ton of them before the NFC Championship. You guys stopped asking and then I did a press conference Wednesday. Were you a part of that conference call? Did you see how it went? No, that's what was frightening me. That wasn't my dog. The radio station put us on hold, they wouldn't mute us. Maybe there's something to that, you know? You know, you guys are great, though. I've enjoyed talking to you. But no, I don't enjoy hearing the radio station's ad over and over and over again."

Your health and your projection, your timetable on getting back on the field, what do you foresee?

RS: "Oh yeah, I'll be back on the field May, June. I was back on the treadmill before I had to get the little scope and I look forward to renewing that timeline the next couple weeks. Obviously, I've got a wedding to go to and some things to do. It's going to be quite the March for me, 30th birthday, wedding, new team, new environment. We'll write that down in the record books later about how this month went. But, I'm excited about it so the timeline will be fine. I think with an Achilles or any injury, people like to compare other people. 'This guy came back like this, this guy came back like that.' There are some people that are cut from a different cloth and built from different things and I think I'm one of those people. I look forward to showing people that you can come back better from things. I know [RB Adrian Peterson] A.P. did it, but that was a knee, but I look forward to coming back better than ever. I've got a lot of things to show a few people."

Can you explain the bone spur a little further?

RS: "Yeah, yeah, yeah. On my left heel, there was a bone spur that I had been dealing with for about three years that I've just been postponing getting it done every year. One year it was my son being born, we had lost the Super Bowl and my son was being born. I didn't want to get it done then. Then we went on vacation and they were like, 'You're going to be out for a month-and-a-half, two months.' So, I'm like, 'Do you really want to be walking around on crutches on vacation?' Next year, the same deal. You push it back, push it back and this year we had booked it before the season even started because the trainers were like, 'You've pushed it back far enough.' So, we had booked

it in July. After the Achilles ruptured, I just had to wait a couple more weeks and get it done then when my Achilles got strong enough.”

How long is your recovery from that?

RS: “Oh, it’s four to six weeks. Four to six weeks. It’s just bone edema and getting the swelling out and getting back to it. It’s nothing structurally with my Achilles or anything.”

Why was it important for you to negotiate your own contract and how did that experience go for you?

RS: “It was really important to me. I think that a lot of times in our league there are players that have the ability to do that and have the ability to structure their own deals and really take advantage of just being in control of their own destiny. Sometimes these agents, there are great agents that take care of their players, make sure our players are ready for life after football, their finances, whatever their case may be. Then there are some agents who negotiate a deal in 2006 and don’t talk to their client again until 2010, or whatever the case may be. And those are the things that we’re trying to avoid, that I’m trying to avoid. I didn’t feel like I needed an agent. I felt like I knew contracts well enough and I felt like coming off the Achilles, there’s going to be negotiation points, there’s going to be give and takes on both sides and I felt comfortable with that.”

You were bashed in some circles for the contract you signed. What ticks you off the most or what do you think is the biggest misconception that you’ve heard?

RS: “Well, the biggest misconception is that it’s a bad deal. If you’re comparing it to my last deal in Seattle, I had no money guaranteed. If I’m basing it off just going off my last year in Seattle and you compared it, I got no money guaranteed in Seattle, I’m coming off a ruptured Achilles, what do I have? What security do I have there? With this deal, I get five million dollars guaranteed, which is half of my other contract. I get the ability to make more than I could have done whether I played at an All-Pro level or not in Seattle. And that’s really all that I wanted. I play at the level that I’m capable of. I feel security in the upcoming years and I felt comfortable with that. I’m great with that. I think the thing I’m most frustrated about is all the people that were like so high on bashing this deal refuse to bash the agents that do awful deals every year. There are agents out there that are doing three-million-dollar, fully guaranteed deals that look like 50-million-dollar deals, when the guy gets cut after two weeks or after a year and the guy only makes five-million-dollars of a 50-million-dollar contract. Nobody sits there and bashes that agent. You don’t hear any four-year-old writing any articles about it. I mean, the kid from Philly, it’s a one-year, six-million-dollar deal, but to everybody else it’s a 40-million-dollar deal. There’s nobody to bash it because nobody’s even paying attention to most of these agents and their deals. I think that this was just one of those things where the agents feel uncomfortable with a player taking the initiative to do his own deal. It obviously puts a fire under them. It makes them more accountable for their actions because more players will do this. I feel comfortable with it.”

Have you heard from players around the league? Do you think it will become a trend?

RS: "I do. I've heard from a lot of players. A lot of players were already on board with doing this and thinking of doing this. I just gave them the confidence to move forward with them. Obviously, I'm coming off an injury, so the logistics of things changed slightly. But, I think a lot more players feel educated enough to go forward and negotiate their own deals. I think these agents sometimes benefit from relationships. 'Oh I know this GM. We've had dealings with for years.' They really don't have to do a ton of work. 'Hey, I called this guy. How much are you willing to give him? Oh, five-million-dollars? Okay, I'll convince him that that's good enough.' Instead of guys being able to control their own destiny, being in control of their own finances and I think it goes back to just educating our players in general on their own finances and being in control of your own life. I think more of our players are."

You've served as the Seahawks player representative. Is that something that you want to do here? S Eric Reid was it the last few years with the 49ers. Are you concerned at all with his status in the league right now?

RS: "We are concerned, because he played at a high level for just about every year that he's played in this league. He's made enough plays to be signed with a team and to make his money. He deserves his money. Safeties make a certain amount. I would think he's top-five, top-10 safeties in this league so he deserves to be paid accordingly. So, there is concern there, because you would think a player of his caliber and his quality would be picked up by now. I think great teams are still looking and people are still looking for players. I'm praying that he gets picked up, but if he doesn't, then I think there will be a conversation with the league office and the union on potential league action."

You'd want to pursue being the player's association rep here?

RS: "Yeah, I'm on the executive committee for the player's union, already. But, I'd love to continue to be a rep. I think it's an honor to serve your men and to help the next generation of players in any way that I can."

When you were considering your options in your first time as a free agent, how important was it to come to a team like the 49ers that have been at the forefront of player activism?

RS: "Honestly that didn't really come into play as much. Obviously, I feel free to speak as I want. Obviously, in terms of how I feel on different social issues, etcetera, etcetera. Obviously, the 49ers have been open to allowing their players the freedom to express themselves on this platform, so that is something that is great about this organization. But, the biggest thing was Kyle and John reaching out initially. They reached out within five, 10 minutes of the news hitting the wire. Just having that kind of respect from a team means a lot to me. There were other teams that reached out consequently after, but I think that meant a lot to me, just the want of a team, a team showing you that they want you, that they value you. Obviously, Seattle showed that they didn't value me as much, letting me go to see the market. So, I think there is something to be said for both."

The NFL is currently looking into the catch rule and getting rid of the going to the ground part of that. What is your perspective on that? Do you favor that change?

RS: "I'm in favor of it because it gives the refs more clarity. I think anytime you can give the referees more of a straight line, an edge, to call plays, I think it's better for the game. I think obviously there's been a lot of scrutiny on the catch rule. Last year, my team was at the wrong end of it. A guy caught the ball and ran three or four steps, put his hand in the ground, fell, fumbled the ball and nobody touched him and they said it was an incomplete pass. It was the most ridiculous thing I think I've ever seen. I think that they need to do more rules like that. They need to take the gray area out of a lot more rules because the rule book is getting too crazy. It's getting too extensive. Every year, the refs are getting scrutinized left and right when it's a bang-bang play. This game is happening at a million miles an hour and there's really nothing you can do about it. The rule book is so complex. How many times can you think of 1,500 rules in a second of a play and see which ones apply to that particular play? So, I think any time they can simplify the rule book and simplify the ref's understanding and the public's understanding is better for the game."

Given the nature of the rivalry between the Seahawks and the 49ers and all of that happened with you at the center of it, was it a little surreal to put on the suit today and see yourself in that hat?

RS: "I'm a pro's pro. Like I said, at the end of the day, the team that wanted to me was the team whose logo I'm wearing today. It's a business. The Seahawks went and made their business decision and made the decision that they needed to make. The San Francisco 49ers made the decision that they needed to make and I look forward to helping them win ball games. At the end of the day, the rivalry is what it is. It'll be renewed, I'm sure, and I'll be at the center of it again, I guess. But, at the end of the day I'm just coming here to help this team win ball games. I like what they stand for. I like the direction that this team is headed and I look forward to making new memories."

Your negotiations with president of 49ers enterprises and executive vice president of football operations Paraag Marathe lasted for five-and-a-half hours. Can you talk a little bit about that whole process?

RS: "Don't take John out of this. John was in there too. It was a long negotiation and I think it was probably I would think one of the more respectful negotiations that anybody, you know it's just pure business. I think people were like, 'Is he going to get emotional? He's an emotional player? What is he going to do?' There was so much speculation, it was ridiculous. At the end of the day, you've got to separate you as a football player from you as a business man. I don't sit in business meetings and just go crazy, like, 'Oh my god, what kind of deal is this?' Nobody does that. At the end of the day, I gave them the pros and cons I thought of me as a player, they gave me the pros and the cons. They offered me a deal, we manipulated some of the numbers on that deal over five hours. I think I got to a place where I felt comfortable with the numbers and the security with me playing at the level that I'm accustomed to and I think they felt comfortable with their security of if I never get back to playing and I never step back on the field, that they need the ability to be able to cut ties and not put themselves at a disadvantage

financially. I understand that. I understand how this game goes and I look forward to showing them who I've been."

You will be joining a very young secondary, especially at cornerback. Do you enjoy that aspect of the game, sort of imparting your knowledge to younger guys? Second question, do you know CB Ahkello Witherspoon at all? Are you familiar with his game?

RS: "I'm familiar with his game more than I am with him as a person, personally. I look forward to the challenge. I've always been a guy to take young guys under my wing and give them any advice that they've wanted or they were seeking. Whether it's staying after practice and spending countless hours of just technique or up in the film room when nobody is watching, 'This is what I see. This is how I see it. This is situational football. These are fundamental things for me that I look for in a formation in a game, in a player, in a split.' I look forward to helping this group grow. I think that one of my best attributes is leadership and helping guys get the best out of themselves. And I think that at the end of the day, that's all I want to do. I want to help them become better men and better players. Whatever that may be. If that means on-the-field just communicating better, if that's off-the-field, just getting your affairs in order in a better way that's more conducive of success, I think that's my job and I take that responsibility seriously."

You mentioned being an emotional player. Kyle talked about it a little bit. When dealing with coaches in Seattle, specifically some of the offensive play calling, was that much ado about nothing or do you look back at that and say I could've handled that differently?

RS: "I think it's both. I think it's kind of much ado about nothing in terms of the organization and how we communicated internally. On the outside, there was definitely a way for me to handle it better. There were a lot of conversations that went on before that all culminated. But, there's definitely some growing in that moment, some learning and I can appreciate that. Kyle and I spoke about that the first time we sat down and had dinner. We had the same conversation and we came to the same conclusion. But, I think at the end of the day that's part of growing up as a player and a person."