

TRANSCRIPTIONS



**Head Coach Kyle Shanahan
Press Conference – January 9, 2020
San Francisco 49ers**

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Opening comments:

“Alright guys, just two questionable for the game, [DL] Dee Ford and [DL Kentavious] Street.”

Will OL Mike Person start at right guard for you?

“I’m not sure yet.”

In terms of LB Kwon Alexander, will you be activating him tomorrow off IR?

“Yeah, we have to do it by one. So, plan on doing that tomorrow.”

Do you know who he's going to replace on the roster?

“I’ve got a pretty good idea. We’ve got more time to think about it, so going to wait until 12:59 tomorrow.”

When you guys had that week off, did you have to kind of manage the emotions of this week or the energy just to make sure the guys don't peak too soon?

“A little bit. It's a little bit different. Everyone calls it a Bye week, but it's not a Bye week because Bye weeks usually you want to get away for a little bit because you’ve got a long season ahead of you. This wasn't something you wanted to get away from. We wanted to take advantage of the time to rest and recover from a long season and get a little bit healthier, more energy. But, at the same time you’ve got to stay into it every single day. So, there's usually one day off, two days on. We only had two full-speed practices. I think we were able to rest our bodies and make us fresher this week. I know our guys are ready to get out there. It's been too long now and we can't wait for Saturday.”

As a head coach on a Bye week, do you have to guard against doing too much or adding too much new stuff to your game plan now that you’ve had all this extra time?

“Yes, definitely. I think it helps not knowing who you're going to play for sure until that weekend. Everyone says you're going to get ahead, but you can't get ahead on I think it was three possibilities. You can't get fully ahead on three teams so you peek all of them. Yeah, I think a little of that is overrated. But, sometimes you have too much time. You have more time to overthink stuff. I think it was perfect how it worked out.”

Minnesota has been able to keep together their defensive players and their coaches for a long time under a salary cap era where it's really hard to do. How does that manifest itself on film when you watch them?

"That's why they look like one of the better defenses in the league. Any time you have the scheme that they have with the coaching staff and you have the talent that they've gotten over the years, mainly through the Draft, but when you keep those guys and you have a good scheme and talented guys who play together year after year, that's why I believe they're the toughest defense we faced this year. That's why I think they're where they're at."

What is your message to QB Jimmy Garoppolo this week?

"Just be you. Do the same thing you do every single day. Didn't give him a big message this week. Just talk to him the same way I have every other week."

Veteran players sometimes talk about how the playoffs are different, like it feels different, you have to prepare different. What about from a coaching standpoint? If you're coaching a playoff different, is it any different than coaching a regular season game?

"I mean, everything's different because if you lose, it's over. Everyone knows that. That's a different feeling. But, to me that's just feelings. That's nerves, emotions. After that, nothing is different. It's a football game. The rules are all the same. Nothing changes."

Is there an advantage to maybe not knowing the stakes for players who haven't been in the playoffs before?

"Maybe. I think it depends on the person. Maybe not for the whole team. I think it's different for each individual. That's what I do think has been neat about this this year is that we really didn't fall into it at the end. Starting out 8-0 like we did, where everyone is trying to catch you, and don't really clinch anything until the last week or the week before, every week has kind of felt like playoffs to us. When you work so hard to start out that way, lots of people relax the last couple games because you've done it. It's been neat that we were able to start out the way we did, have a pretty good record all year. But, we've never been able to relax at all. When you're like that, the last five games of the year, I've said this throughout the week, they all felt like playoff games because you really like all the good you've done to get to where you're at, none of it matters until you clinched the playoff spot, you get the highest seed you can. We did. Had a couple days to enjoy it. Now we're just ready to get to this game."

To that point, how do you minimize the distractions that come with a playoff game? Naturally there's more media, there are more ticket requests for players. What have you told those guys?

"I always try to talk about, I mean, the media just comes with it. There's designated times that everyone has got to talk. That's just part of the job and what you've got to do. There's just more people there. But, it's the same minutes and everything that we're allocated to talk to everybody. I think the biggest difference is understanding your family and the people who care about you and stuff. Now they're really into it. Now like it's their life. I

respect that. That's how I grew up, knowing my dad was in the playoffs. That was everything to me. I know that's how it is for all of our players and their significant others, their families. The stuff you try to tell them, 'guys, it's different for all of them, but it's the same for us. Don't let other people's perception or how they're feeling affect you.' That is reality. It's also human nature, but if you don't address that stuff and you pay attention to how everyone else is anxious, how everyone is trying to come, everyone is worried about tickets, now all of a sudden you're worrying about stuff that doesn't matter. That's how you don't perform to your ability."

Why have you stuck with RB Tevin Coleman as your starting running back?

"Because Tevin brings a lot to our game. I know he hasn't had the same yards-per-carry as [RB] Raheem [Mostert] has done. I don't really care much who the starter is. All those guys play. Raheem has got the bulk of it. Usually, in my opinion, the guy who gets the bulk of the carries is usually the guy we call the starter because we're treating him as the starter. If he's not out there the first play, I know no one else calls him the starter because that's what matters, I guess, to be called a starter. Tevin started out that way this year. I think he handles it very well. I think Raheem is very comfortable in his situation when he comes in and doesn't have a problem with it. There's a different element to all of them. I do like having Tevin out there because the way he hits holes, he brings a little different physicality to the game. But, I like what all our backs do."

You and the Vikings have kind of bucked the league-wide trend in the way you use the fullback. Why is it important for you to have an impact player like FB Kyle Juszczyk at that position?

"You always try to get the best player at every position that you can. So, we were pumped to get Juice when we got him. I just know me personally, I like having a fullback because I feel like that's the only way you can dictate your terms. When you have a fullback in the game, if you really want to run the ball, you can run the ball regardless of what the defense is doing. If you don't have someone in the backfield, then you only have one halfback back there and no lead blocker, they have to bring a certain blitz, a safety somewhere where you can run it, but there is an unblocked guy that will meet him four-yards deep in the backfield. So, now you have to have check with me's, you've got to do stuff, which is fine and everyone does that. But, now you can't just dictate your own stuff. That's why I like it."

One of the benefits of getting Jimmy was he did have a little bit of experience just being in the league. Having gone through three playoff runs with New England, are there parts of the process that he's adapted to easily or he's already been familiar with having been from that scenario that you've seen?

"Yes. I think that's one of the bigger things, Jimmy just going and being able to go to those Super Bowls, watch those playoff games, being able to go through the whole process and stuff. You do see all the extra outside stuff that does come with it. You're not overwhelmed by it at all. Jimmy knows exactly what's going to happen before it happens because he's been through it at New England. I do think that's an advantage for players and for coaches just because you know what's ahead and so it doesn't surprise you. It's pretty easy to just stay the course."

In what ways does DL Nick Bosa affect an offensive game plan?

“Anybody who you struggle to block one-on-one affects it a ton. I mean, I don't care how good of tackles there are, when there's certain edge rushers, there's a few of them in this league and Bosa is one of them, but when those guys can affect the quarterback on any play, you've got to be very smart. I don't care who the tackle is versus certain type of rushers, if the guy he's going against is a really good player and he knows you're throwing it every down, that guy is not going to be able to block him eventually. So, you've got to take all of that into account, whether you help, how to run the ball, a lot of things like that, but if you only have one guy out there, it's a lot easier to help, too. When you've got a little bit more guys like we do, it makes it tougher.”

In Youngstown and in your trip to Florida, you and the players talked about lack of distractions. You basically lived in a hotel yourself. You also had 500 yards of offense in both of those games. Is there any sort of connection to that to being in the zone or in that environment?

“I'm going to get our whole offense and myself in trouble with our families. No, I don't connect that. I just think it was just how it worked out, the way the defenses went, the way the game went. But trust me, if I believed it was that, we'd be in a hotel all year.”

Dee Ford came back from that hamstring strain initially and then quickly aggravated it. Did you guys wait longer in the process this time to get him back into practice?

“Yes, we did wait longer. It was more we're trying to be smarter about it. I don't know if that's the right word, but I think Dee is also. It's tough for athletes in these situations. They want to play no matter what. When we look back at New Orleans, I think Dee was a little bit tight before the game. It's a little tight. He knows how much we're counting on him to go out. He's not going to come up and say, 'hey coach, I'm a little tight.' No one totally knows. He thought he could go. The way Dee Ford comes off the ball, his fourth play of the game, he came off hard and he tweaked his hamstring again. Now we can look back and Dee can learn from that and I can learn from that, too. I hope Dee, if he feels that tight, he can come tell me. Now I know from that history of what happened in New Orleans, 'you're feeling like that,' I know what that means. Then we have to make a decision whether we want to make that gamble or not.”

You've mentioned all the extra work, the added pressure. Have you found time to enjoy this yet? I mean, this is what you've worked for all season and your whole life to be in the playoffs with a chance for the Super Bowl?

“Yeah, I mean, you enjoy. It's a better feeling, especially when you have an off day, which we got after the Seattle game, got a couple of them. It feels good, but all you think about is the next game. I will say it, because I felt this way as a fan my entire life, I felt this way as a coach, but I really believe there's only one team happy at the end of the year. You can be positive and stuff, that gets you excited, but, I mean, no matter what happens, there's only going to be one team that's truly happy at the end of this year. We've gotten to a point that we're excited about where we got, especially compared to these last two

years. We have one expectation now. We're not going to sit back and enjoy what we've done because now it's about what you're doing right now and where you're going."

In your opinion, just last year we were asking you questions about defensive coordinator Robert Saleh's job security, now he's interviewing for a head coaching job. In your opinion, what does that say about the rollercoaster element of being a coach in this league and how he's dealt with all that?

"I think it's good for Saleh to go through it because that's just how it is. I had to go through it a lot, too, as a coordinator. Sometimes people aren't used to that. You're not going to be until you go through it. It happens for coordinators usually. Sometimes it doesn't happen until you become a head coach. I think that stuff is great for people. I hated going through it myself. It's not fun for yourself and it's definitely worse for your family. But, it also is the reality of our business. If you're getting into this business to show everyone how good you are, you are not going to have a very happy life because you're not in control of that. You do as good as you can. Saleh has been good. He's always been good. That's stuff you just try to tell him. That's why it was never a question for me. I knew how good he was. We all get better, too. But, there's so many variables that go into the sport. Same thing I tell quarterbacks, tell everyone. Everyone in this business knows how it's going to be if something bad does happen. That happens in sports. You've got to be able to deal with it. Saleh is a great coach and I hope to have him here for a long time. But, I also know, whether it's this year, whether it's next year, whatever, Saleh is too good and too unique. It's a matter of time before he's a head coach."

The fact that three road teams won last week follows a trend all season in which I think road teams have won a greater percentage of games this season than in many years. I was wondering why you think that has happened this year and whether you think that home-field advantage still exists?

"It definitely exists. It's just random. It's global warming (laughter). There's home field advantage. It's harder to play when you can't hear. That doesn't mean you're going to lose. But, I mean, that's a fact. It's harder to play on the road. But, that definitely doesn't mean you can't win, as everyone proves each week."

You were 0-8 on the road last year. During the offseason, did you do a study to see what you could do differently at any point in the process of going on the road or was it just one of those things that worked out better?

"No, I just looked at it I don't think our record at home was that great either. It was harder on the road. I mean, I just thought we needed to become a better team. If you become a better team, you usually get better in every area."

Did your father have to chill you out when he was in the playoffs? What was that like?

"Yeah, a little bit. He had patience with me. Eventually he would put me in my place and I'd have to leave him alone. It was between my mom and I the rest of the week (laughter)."