

TRANSCRIPTIONS



TE George Kittle
Press Conference – January 8, 2020
San Francisco 49ers

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A lot of people are wondering how QB Jimmy Garoppolo is going to do in his first playoff start. What concerns should anyone have about that new experience for a guy like him?

“I don't know. I haven't played in a playoff game either. I'm not really worried. Jimmy has been doing it all year. Every primetime game he shows up, plays well. He's just going to do him and play really well. I just have that expectation of him. I have all the confidence in the world in him.”

Figure out what the offense is doing based on alignments and splits and things like that. As an offensive player or just somebody in the locker room, does any of that rub off on the guys on your side of the ball in terms of preparation and things like that?

“Yes and no. I listen to [CB Richard] Sherman in the locker room. He talks to guys all the time. It could just be from walking from the locker room to the cafeteria. He's giving tips. ‘Hey, we are going to have this in practice. You need to do this.’ He talks the entire day. He does a great job of that. He's had the experience. We have guys with experience. Everyone that's done the playoffs, they've played in the big games, they definitely have shared their thoughts on it. At the same time, we've been playing good football all year. I think we're just going to go out there and do what we've been doing all year.”

Has there ever been any point in the last two years where you ask him about specific defenses?

“I mean, I might ask him on man coverage and the route. If I have this type of route, how do I attack his leverage? He's been an open book on that, which has been incredibly helpful for me. If I need something, I always ask. I know he talks to wide receivers if they need stuff, too. I know he's had conversations with Jimmy. Yeah, Sherman is an open book. He wants to teach guys. That's what I love about him.”

Does the week feel different? How important is it to keep things pretty status quo?

“I don't know, it feels like another week. If you lose, you're done, which is a weird feeling. We haven't had that one yet. I think the whole team has done a really good job of handling their business this week. We had two really good practices last week on the bye week. We've had good practices this whole week. Everyone is on top of their stuff, everyone has been in their books. We're just excited to play football on Saturday.”

How has the addition of WR Emmanuel Sanders impacted the offense?

“Other than winning us three or four games by himself, him and Jimmy, pretty helpful. The greatest thing about him is he didn't have to learn anything. A guy like that, who has done it before, he was kind of in our offense with the [Denver] Broncos. He didn't have to learn anything. He just went out there and did it. The connection between him and Jimmy, it was instant. They didn't have to build a chemistry or anything like that. It's definitely been very helpful. I know Emmanuel is really excited to be here. Like I said, he's won us a couple games basically by himself. We're going to count on him going forward in these playoffs.”

The Vikings defense, what have you seen of them?

“They have a lot of different coverages and stuff. I mean, they do a good job. They focus on tight ends. I mean, whatever [head] coach [Kyle] Shanahan has schemed up, I'm going to do that. It's been working for me so far this year, so I'm going to keep doing that.”

Do you feel Shanahan is a counterbalance for what they throw at you?

“Like I said, it's worked all year. I think we've done pretty good at the tight end position this year in the whole room, whether it be [TE] Ross Dwelley, [TE Garrett] Celek or [TE] Levine [Toilolo]. I think we're going to keep attacking it like we have been, let the game take care of itself. There's going to be ups and downs. When I have my name called, I've just got to make the play.”

Having LB Kwon Alexander and S Jaquiski Tartt and DL Dee Ford back in practice, what is the energy level like?

“It's awesome. Those guys, I mean, getting to watch the defense back at its full strength, when you have Quiski out there, linebackers, Dee and [DL Nick] Bosa on the edge, it's fun to watch honestly. Sometimes in practice, when the defense is off, the offense is off, you'll be talking about plays and stuff. This week, you kind of want to watch because it's fun to see them working together. They've definitely brought the tempo back, picked it up a little bit. Fun to get out there and see those guys play.”

How do you feel your own personal skill set has developed or changed this season?

“This season? I mean, you get better with every game. If you just attack it each and every single play, you get better. You figure things out. Whether it's how to sit somewhere in a zone, man coverage, how to beat it with certain leverages, techniques like that. Game by game, my game, I think, has definitely gotten better. Every practice extra that I get, every game extra I get this post-season just helps me try to become a better player.”

It's going to be the first playoff game for Levi's Stadium for a guy like you and Jimmy. Is it better to keep your emotions under control or dive in and live it out loud?

“I'm going to do what I've been doing for the last 16 games - 14. Sorry, I missed two. I'm just going to play football and have fun doing it. I feel like if you change things up, it's

probably not for the best. Our team has been doing that. Nothing has really changed this whole week. Intensity has been up. I'm just going to go play football.”

Is your Dad still writing those pregame letters and because this is your first playoff game, are you expecting something a little special?

“Yes, he does still write those. Yes, I definitely am expecting something a little bit extra. The last game versus Seattle, usually it's about four pages, it was a six pager. The more the better. I expect a short story this time.”

What do you expect from the crowd?

“Levi's Stadium? I mean, they've been incredible all year, home or away games. All of our away games felt like home games. I just expect them to be incredible. Definitely we've got to give them something to cheer about, give them something to back. If we get rolling, I know Levi's Stadium is going to be right behind us.”

Were you surprised that the Vikings were the team that you're going to face?

“It's the playoffs. Nothing really surprises me. The Patriots losing kind of surprised me just because it's [New England Patriots QB] Tom Brady. Never bet against Tom Brady. Other than that, no.”