

TRANSCRIPTIONS



**Head Coach Kyle Shanahan
Press Conference – November 20, 2019
San Francisco 49ers**

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Opening comments:

“The injuries for today, not practicing will be [RB Matt] Breida, [DL Dee] Ford, [K] Robbie [Gould], [TE George] Kittle, [WR] Deebo [Samuel], [WR] Emmanuel Sanders and [T] Joe Staley, and limited will be [DL] D.J. Jones and [RB] Raheem [Mostert]. Go ahead.”

With Deebo, is it still his shoulder or anything in particular?

“No, just shoulder.”

Does that do anything as far as, do you have to change practices or anything with so many guys out?

“I mean, it’s going to be our first time getting a full week in in a little bit, so we need to get some practice in today. You know, we’re down on a few receivers so you have guys who normally do a lot of scout team have got to do a lot more with the first-team reps, which means you’ve got to get some DBs or running backs or whatever it is to help out with scout team receivers. It’s a little bit of a trickledown effect, but we should still be able to get the reps in.”

Is D.J. limited? You initially said you expected him out a couple of weeks. Is he coming along pretty well, like better than expected?

“No. He’s about right on track. He’s going to be right down to it this week and we’ll see how it goes. He’s limited so he’ll get out there and be able to do a little bit, but we’ve still got to ease him back in and be careful.”

Did Robbie’s quad end up being more serious than initially--?

“Yeah, you’ve just got to be so careful with quads with a kicker because it has to be 100-percent. You go into a game and it’s 98-percent and you have to kick a long field goal or you do it in warmups and you re-tweak it and now you’re out a month. It’s not like you can get another kicker up that day. So, we’ve got to be very careful with it. It is week to week. He definitely has a better chance this week than he did last week. He has had a chance each week, but you can’t push it with a kicker. There’s no backup out there and it will set him back too long if he tweaks it.”

How would you characterize Kittle’s health right now?

“Better than last week, but not good enough to practice today. It’s going to come down to the wire again and hopefully it will work out.”

Aside from Ford and Staley are the guys who are out today, are they all going to be game-time decisions?

“Yeah, everybody who’s not practicing will be a game-time decision. The other guys, I think we’ll have a better idea here by Friday.”

When you start to look ahead to the Packers, do you just see a lot of similarities? You have a better idea of what they’re trying to accomplish than a lot of teams you start off looking at early in the week?

“Not totally. I have some familiarity with them just, you know, working with [passing game coordinator] Mike [LaFleur] and going against them last year and then understand what [Green Bay Packers head coach] Matt [LaFleur] tries to do offensively. It’s definitely different what he does there and it’s always different based off of what players you have. There are some similarities, but it’s like that with a lot of teams we faced too.”

What do you see as the biggest challenge from taking on the Packers?

“I mean, they’re an 8-2 team. They’ve been real tough to beat. Everyone knows how good their quarterback is, I mean, he’s been one of the best quarterbacks of our generation. He’s right up there with all those guys and he’s never out of any game, no matter what’s happening. Their defense has been very good at getting turnovers, they’ve been very good in the red zone. That’s why they haven’t given up as many points as they have yards. Their quarterback, obviously is going to make a lot of plays, but they’re also not turning it over. So, that’s a tough formula to beat.”

Is there anything their run game does particularly well?

“No, I think they’ve got good O-Linemen and their back has been very good this year. Didn’t know a lot about him and now I do and now I think a lot of people in this league do. He’s had some success and it’s well-earned. He’s been pretty dynamic in both the run and pass game.”

Matt LaFleur said one of the things that he picked up from you just in terms of an approach to coaching is honesty. Why is being honest with your players and coaches important to you and where did you pick that up from initially?

“That was the biggest advice my dad always gave me, just be honest. To me, it’s not just players, it’s what 95-percent of people in life want. There’s always a few people who don’t want you to tell them the truth and it’s kind of tough when they hear that. I mean, you try to work hard and you try to coach them as good as you can. Most players, players want a job. They want to support their family, they want to have a good career. Your job is to coach them and help them do better so the more you can be honest with them, even though it’s hard sometimes and can get worse for a couple days, they always end up coming back and respecting you knowing you’re doing everything you can to help them.”

What will the emotion be like, because you guys worked together on different staffs, to see Matt on the other sideline as a head coach?

“Not much emotion at all. I mean, I’ve known Matt for a long time. I’ve coached against him before, not as a head coach. When you go against coaches and people you know, I don’t think there are that much emotions. I think it could be different for a player. Maybe if I was a receiver and Matt was a corner, or I was an O-Lineman and he was a three-technique or something, but we’re just coaches. You don’t really think about that much. It’s more fun that when you’re going to hang out in the offseason or see each other down in Indy, it’s a little more fun that night when you won the game so you can mess with the other a little bit more.”

Former 49ers QB Steve Young used to say his teams had ‘it,’ a certain undefinable, intangible qualities that mattered and made a difference. Would you say this team has ‘it?’

“I think we have so far. I think ‘it’ can mean a lot of things, but any team that finds a way to win consistently, no matter how or what type of win it is, usually people start to say that. That’s what good teams do. Halfway through the season, or just past that, we’ve done that so far, but that has nothing to do with this week and going forward.”

Matt LaFleur also said that it’s really easy to be honest with Green Bay Packers QB Aaron Rodgers because he’s so honest with himself. Do you see that in QB Jimmy Garoppolo as well?

“Yeah, definitely. It all depends on the type of people you’re dealing with, but I’d also say the majority of guys that you deal with are pretty straight forward. As long as you do it right away, you know, if you act a certain way for three months and then all of a sudden you have a loss and then that’s the first day you decide to be honest, then that’s going to be rough for you usually. You try to be yourself day in and day out, whether you’re having success or whether you’re in the dumps and usually when you do that, people get to know each other and you can work through things together.”

How did you first connect with Matt? Why is he in the position he is?

“Yeah, I knew Matt, we were down in Houston. We had a quality control opening. [Defensive coordinator] Robert Saleh was the defensive quality control there and we didn’t want to go through a huge process. We were trying to do it pretty fast and Robert Saleh recommended Matt to us and we got Matt in with a few other names and we didn’t know Matt at all. Saleh knew him from working in college, so we just brought him in on an interview and did a few other people and we ended up choosing Matt.”

Seems like this time last year you were saying that this team needed closers and now you guys have been getting through in tough situations. Obviously, you got Jimmy back, that helps, but what do you think has been the biggest change year over year in that regard?

“I think we’ve gotten a lot better in all three phases. I think we’ve gotten better at coaching. I think our guys are playing better and we have added some closers. We’ve taken a few steps in the pass rush, I think we’ve taken some steps at receiver. I think our quarterback has taken some steps, our secondary has, our linebackers are better. I think everyone has gotten a little bit better. We lost a lot here, but we were in a lot of close games and our teams have been in those situations a lot before. Even guys who aren’t new, I think

they're better at those situations now. We've been through it, we know how easily you can be up and how quick you can lose a game. That happened a lot in our first two years. It's been somewhat similar this year, but we've been on the other side of it. That's how most NFL games are. It's a very fine line between the guys at the top and the guys at the bottom. Usually it's just a few plays throughout the game."

You grew up in this world, but do you look at how all these connections with Robert and Matt, how they helped get each other to certain spots and then bringing in Mike LaFleur, do you ever think about how small that world is, that everybody now is at the top of the level?

"Yeah I do. I've thought about it for a little bit over the last few years because we all were together for so long and we didn't know each other to begin with and you just add one here and then you work with someone for a year and a half, another spot opens and you never really know exactly who you're working with until you've been with them for about a year. That's why interviews are somewhat scary. You can interview 10 different people and unless they don't know what they're doing, I mean usually everyone's pretty impressive on an interview as long as they know what they're talking about. Then you get with them for a few months and you lose some games and you start to find out who people really are. In the coaching profession, you always want recommendations. You always would love someone that you have worked with before because you know how they're going to be in the heat of battle and what you go through, so you lean that direction. Saleh was the first guy that introduced us to LaFleur and then LaFleur introduced me to his brother and it's just a trickle-down effect. You get guys, you bring them in at entry level roles which is quality control or even below that, some secretary-type levels and then they just prove themselves. The guys who haven't are usually out of the league in about a year or two years after that. The guys who do, they keep climbing because you work with these guys left and right. Quality controls are who you depend on so you give them a lot of information. I got a ton of information from [Oakland Raiders head coach] Jon Gruden for two years when I was his quality control. It's very valuable stuff so you want those guys with you and you try to bring them with you. Usually when you have some success, someone gets promoted and then they branch off. I've had a lot of good guys around us. It's cool to see these guys getting what they deserve."

This could have a huge impact on the playoffs later on. How important is it to have this game at home for potential seeding down the line?

"You'd rather play every game at home, of course. On the road is always a disadvantage when you can't hear. But I mean, I don't even think about playoff seeding right now. Our goal is to get in the playoffs. We're all right there, there's still a lot of football left. Each game we win, we've got a better chance at getting in there. You don't think about seeds, at least I don't, until you can narrow it down to one or two games. I think we're far from that right now."

What's the frustration level as a coach when you see Jimmy do some of the high-level things that he does, but he also seems to make some decisions that are very, very questionable that lead to interceptions and potential game changing situations?

“I think that’s part of football, you get used to that stuff. What’s more frustrating to me is when a guy can’t make any plays and a guy can’t throw it at all and you just sit there and you’re beating your head against the wall for three-and-a-half hours. So, it’s nice when they do make a lot of plays and do some good stuff, but some bad plays do come with that. I understand that, I think Jimmy will get better in that area. I think he does continue to get in that area and I think we also could make it easier on him based on the type of game we call, how good we do around him, but that’s part of football. It’s very rare that you just come out and throw a ton of touchdowns and not picks, but I do like that Jimmy doesn’t seem to be affected by it, that he doesn’t go into a shell. He still gives us a chance to win. The more that he can keep playing the way he is without doing those turnovers, the harder he’ll be to stop.”

Part of the job as a quarterback is he has to stand in there and take a shot. Jimmy, I think said, he didn’t even see the play that won the game last time. Is that something you can work on, or do you either have that or you don’t have that?

“I think you either have that or don’t have that. I think anyone can talk themselves into being tough for a play or two, or for a game or two. Just watch quarterbacks over time, as you get hit a certain amount of times it doesn’t feel good. It really hurts for everybody. I think it takes very special guys to hang in there with the toughness that you’ve got to have and still be able make decisions and still have an elite arm and still be able to read everything and process it. That’s why I don’t think there’s 32 on the planet, I think there’s less than that.”

Is Aaron Rodgers another example?

“Yeah, he’s a pretty good one.”

When you’re not winning, primetime games are not easy to come by. This will be three in the last four games. Being flexed to the Sunday night, the game of the week, does it add to the intensity and excitement of this game?

“It’s always good when you feel like everyone’s watching you. I think guys are used to the national, but for me it’s different when you know every coach and every player is watching in the league. I think that’s really cool when all your peers get to sit back and watch. Besides that I’m just glad we’ve got four more hours for Kittle and Deebo and Emmanuel to rest and recover.”

Following up on that, does this game feel like getting a win is a little bit extra crucial given that you have to head out for back-to-back road games against really good teams?

“The other time we went on back-to-back road games we won them so I don’t really think about that. I just think about how many wins you need to get in the tournament and no one knows that answer yet and we’re not there. So you just keep going and doing that and once you get in the tournament, then you think about stuff like that. That’s why I think it’s way too early to be thinking that.”

Is Jimmy’s progress coming back from injury and also just getting to know your playbook better on schedule with what you would expect from him?

“Yes, I think some games have even been ahead. I knew it would start out slow for him this year, like it does for everyone coming off an ACL, especially with a guy who in my opinion was almost a rookie. He had played, I think, less games than [QB] C.J. [Beathard] and [QB] Nick [Mullens]. I know he played less than rookie quarterbacks did the year before, guys like [Cleveland Browns QB] Baker [Mayfield] and stuff. He hadn’t played much and then he came off an ACL. I’d be worried for anyone in that situation. I think Jimmy has exceeded some expectations sometimes, but I still think he’s playing well and can still get a lot better.”

You said four more hours for those guys to recover. I couldn’t tell if you were being tongue-and-cheek. Is it that or is it really kind of you guys having four more hours to feel more confident in the decision of whether to play those guys?

“No, I mean that. When you have a lot of guys that are banged up, the later it can be the better. I think it’s a little harder to get going early in the morning. If it was an east coast Monday night game, that’d probably be the best except I wouldn’t want to travel and be on the road, but the longer our guys can have the better. Our guys need it right now.”

Why do you think the run game has struggled the last couple of weeks?

“I think it just goes like that throughout a year. You’re not just going to come out, I know we’re up there in the league with how we’re running the ball, but I don’t believe we’re just going to do that week-in and week-out. If we want to win games, if we want to be good on offense, you’ve got to be able to do a little bit of everything. I am proud of, not proud of it, but I thought it was neat that the offense both games versus Arizona was able to get a win by throwing the ball, overcoming the run game or not being able to run the ball. I think a number of games early in the year, we were able to win the game just running the ball and not throwing it. But, by no means do I think we’re going to be able to do one or the other all year. The last few weeks we’ve had to throw it. We’ll see if that’s the same on Sunday. If not we’ll run it, but I like being able to do both.

Are teams making a concerted effort to take away the run game just because it was so effective?

“At times, but it wasn’t like Arizona did anything different in that game than they did two weeks earlier. At times they do and then at times they don’t. It’s an ebb and flow throughout the game. The healthier you get, the easier it is to run too. Getting Kittle back I think will help. There are a lot of things that do help, but that’s not all the reason. I think you’ve got to be able to do everything and hopefully with what we’ve done a little bit in the past games, the last couple weeks we’ll get some better looks in the run game.”