

TRANSCRIPTIONS



**TE George Kittle
Press Conference – January 24, 2020
San Francisco 49ers**

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You like the present of the Mexican fighter. We saw the video with the mask and everything.

“Yeah, it's awesome. I haven't gotten it yet, but I'm looking forward to it. The Lucha masks are incredible. The design in them and how unique each and every one is, just awesome.”

How well do you know Kansas City Chiefs TE Travis Kelce? Do you take anything from his game? Are you a mutual fan society?

“Definitely mutual fan society. I've been a fan of Travis Kelce since he's been in the league. Watched his tape when I was in college. Watch his tape now. I get his games every single week so I can watch what he does. He's definitely one of the best in the game at what he does, receiving, just finding open spots. I got to meet Travis last year when we played him at the Chiefs. Had a jersey exchange after the season and then I met him again in Atlanta during the Super Bowl. So we definitely know each other. He's awesome. It's going to be really fun to share a field with him again.”

The fan that you're sending to the Super Bowl, what's the story behind that? How did you get connected there?

“It's just the work I do with the USAA and the Taps organization, which is something I've really kind of fallen in love with. I have a lot of family in the military, so it's something that I just respect and the sacrifice that they give is the ultimate sacrifice. So, if I can ever give back and make a family's day or just make them smile a little bit, then I feel like I've done a little part in their lives.”

Are you connected with that family?

“I get to meet them today, so that will be pretty special.”

There's a clip that went around this week where San Francisco 49ers head coach Kyle Shanahan talked about your route. You do this and go to the outside and get held, flag comes out. Is that something that doesn't even really surprise you anymore because he's able to kind of predict the defenses and leverages and that kind of thing?

“That's how he installed the play too. ‘Hey, you're on inside release. He's going to play outside leverage on you. He's probably going to hold you on the way out, just fight through it, and you're either going to catch it or get a holding call.’ So, yeah, that's what happened.”

How much confidence does that give you guys on offense to be able to detect exactly what the tendencies are?

“Yeah, a lot of confidence. He's had multiple plays where at the beginning of the week, when he installs it on Wednesday, if you don't trip and fall, it will be an 80-yard touchdown, and it's an 85-yard touchdown. When you have stuff like that, you definitely have confidence in yourself, but when you have a coach like that, it definitely makes playing a bit easier.”

As the captain and one of the key players on the team, I guess, is it important for you, or are you making a conscious decision that your love for the running game and your willingness to throw out receiving numbers, is that a conscious decision? Like, 'I need to set the tone for these other guys so the other guys buy in,' or is that just you going by the beat of your own drum?

“It's more just the beat of my own drum. If you put in the dirty work and do what you're asked on every single play whether it's pass or run, the rest takes care of itself. Whether it's yards, catches, touchdowns, whatever it is, if you just do what you're supposed to do, you're eventually going to get the ball and it will take care of itself.”

This game seems to be more intricate than it has been the last couple of years. FB Kyle Juszczyk talked about how it's exciting as Christmas morning when he gets the install. Are you similar?

“Yeah, it's fun. Sometimes we get an early install Tuesday nights. Opening it up for the first time when it says Super Bowl First Plays, you definitely kind of smile at it. It was definitely a special moment. It's very exciting. Just looking forward to the opportunity.”

Have you gotten to know former San Francisco 49ers TE Brent Jones at all since you've been with the team?

“A little bit. I got to meet him a couple of times. He spoke to the team last year, and that was really fun. Just told stories, and I think there were three or four guys together from the Super Bowl team and just telling stories of that season. Just don't miss the opportunities. You don't really have a lot of the opportunities, so just take advantage of each and every single one as they come, whether it's practice reps, walk through reps, individual reps, and then ultimately game reps.”

Aside from his impact on the field, how would you describe CB Richard Sherman's effect on this team?

“Sherm's the best. He's such a leader. He talks to every single person in the locker room. He's not one of those guys that sits in his locker space and just talks to guys around him. He's always around. He wants to talk to everybody and he doesn't really force knowledge on you. He's definitely an open book. If you have questions for him, he'll sit and talk football with you all day. That's one thing that's incredible about him. But he's also a guy who supports guys and he'll talk about other things if they have problems or anything like that. He's just incredible. He knows how to read guys, and he definitely knows how to get the best out of each and every single person in this locker room.”

What's the origin of your touchdown celebration?

“It's from Pentagon Jr. He's an AAW wrestler now. Cero Miedo, No Fear. Two years ago in New Orleans, I went to Wrestlemania, and watched him wrestle six different times at a bunch of different shows. Just like his swagger in the ring and his confidence. Just kind of stuck with me. I mean, wrestling, it's something that I love and enjoy too. So, just seeing that in the ring and just how he holds himself and how he enters the ring, how he leaves the ring, everything he does has a purpose, and I just kind of love that.”

How much of an impact have both of your tight end coaches, in college University of Iowa special teams coach LeVar Woods, and San Francisco 49ers assistant head coach and tight ends coach Jon Embree, had on you both as a person and from a confidence standpoint on the football field?

“I can talk about that for a while. Coach Woods, he was a linebackers coach and switched over to tight ends. I don't know how much he knew about tight ends, but he did everything he could to be the best coach he could be. He helped me a lot. He was the first coach that really helped me get on the field as a tight end. I still keep in contact with him. He came to the Seattle game in Seattle. He was at the NFC Championship game. When you have a guy like that, a relationship with him, it means the world to me. Coach Embree has been incredible to me. Definitely, I wasn't a great player my rookie year, but he stayed with me and kept coaching me on things I wasn't very good at, the little things. Ultimately he would say, ‘Look, focus on things you're not good at. Get better at one thing every single day, and eventually it will stick.’ It kind of has stuck, and we keep working on it every single day.”

Is he the one that instilled the mentality of wanting to take the souls of other players?

“No, that's my mentality.”

What do you like about Kansas City Chiefs S Tyrann Mathieu's mindset as a player?

“He's incredible. Just watching him on film, the things that he does, it's really just fun to watch. Just for example, a play that I really like, there's a lot of teams that do pin and pull. They try to get to the outside edge, and how he sets the edge, it doesn't matter who he's going against, whether it's an offensive line plan or wide receiver or tight end, he always sets that edge and does it so well that he gets off the block and still sometimes makes that tackle, which is an incredibly hard thing to ask a safety to do. He does it relentlessly, and he does it every single time. When you have a guy like that that makes those plays and a guy like that that sparks the defense every single time they're on the field, he's definitely their key player.”

Have you gone against him before?

“I think he was with the Cardinals, right? And that was my rookie year. Definitely played him.”

I talked to former University of Iowa FB Steve Manders this week. He talked about how he brought wrestling into your life. What made it stick?

“Yeah, the first wrestling thing I ever watched was Wrestlemania here at Levi’s Stadium. He said, ‘Hey, look, just give it a chance. You’re going to find a guy that you love.’ And, Seth Rollins is a guy from Davenport, Iowa, a hometown guy for me. Kind of fell in love. He had an awesome match against Randy Orton, and he cashed in the money in the bank in the Heavyweight Championship Match. So, he just said, ‘Hey, find a guy that you like and follow along the story line, and you’re going to fall in love with wrestling.’ He definitely made me fall in love with it. I got to go to a show with Manders because now he’s a wrestler. I always enjoyed watching them and their mindset and attitude when they’re wrestling. Day in and day out, no matter what, they always put on a great show. He definitely force-fed me it, and now I just love it.”

Has Kyle Shanahan's playbook evolved since he's been here, or is it more about you as players being able to do more?

“Definitely evolved. Our offense from my rookie year against Carolina opening game is much different than what it is now. And, it’s really fun too. Just being part of the evolution, how it’s grown and how it’s changed is really fun because you can look back, ‘Wow, man,’ that’s what we were doing and now we’re doing this stuff, and it was so much more fun. Just the fact we basically install new plays every single week, we have a whole new playbook every single week, it makes football really fun. You get to learn every single week techniques, how to block guys. The similarities always carry over, but the difference is what makes it exciting.”

How well do you know San Francisco 49ers CEO Jed York and how would you describe his management style as it relates to you, the players?

“I’ve talked to him multiple occasions, Christmas parties, stuff like that. See him in the locker room after games. He’s awesome. One thing I love about him, he doesn’t force his presence on us. He says, ‘Hey, I’m here for you guys if you ever need me. I’m supporting you. I’m your guys’ biggest fan. If you ever need anything, I’m always here to help,’ but he never forces things on guys. I love that about him, and I have the utmost respect for him and how he handles this organization.”

Is there one person you’re looking forward to blocking on Sunday?

“I’m looking forward to block the Iowa linebackers, Kansas City Chiefs LB Ben Niemann and Kansas City Chiefs LB Anthony Hitchens. Hitch used to bully me in practice when I was on scout team in Iowa, so I’m going to give it back to him a couple times.”