

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

# TRANSCRIPTIONS



**Defensive Coordinator Robert Saleh  
Press Conference – September 7, 2017  
San Francisco 49ers  
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**What are you guys doing at free safety this week?**

“Still working through it. Like [head coach] Kyle [Shanahan] said yesterday, we’ll find out Sunday.”

**How much during camp did both S Jaquiski Tartt and DB Lorenzo Jerome get at that spot for this very situation in case you don’t know if DB Jimmie Ward can go?**

“We feel like they got enough. They’re both really prepared. [Defensive backs coach Jeff] Hafley does an unbelievable job preparing those guys. With our defense, just because we are so in tuned to making sure players are fresh, everyone’s got to know more than one position anyway. Throughout OTAs and training camp they’ve been well prepared by their position coaches.”

**Jaquiski, I know you’ve used him in dime packages as a quasi-linebacker. Could he handle jumping from the backend up towards the line of scrimmage if needed?**

“It’s hard. You’re asking a lot of a player. You’re asking them to know two different spots. But, if there’s anyone who can do it it’s him. He is a smart football player and he does everything we’ve asked. He prepares the right way. So, we’ve got great confidence in him to be able to do that.”

**You guys are going up against two very good receivers, Carolina Panthers WR Kelvin Benjamin and Carolina Panthers TE Greg Olsen. In your cover three scheme, one way to attack the cover three is down the seams. How much emphasis are you putting in the free safety to know what to look for in pre-snap recognition so he can make the proper decision if both players beat their respective coverages?**

“The way the defense is structured we feel pretty good about the way teams run seams against us and how we defend it. The free safety always has the freedom to roam in our coverage to be able to handle, I mean, he is a no seams no post safety. So, he’s got to take care of them. But, structurally, the way the defense is designed, seams is not a problem for us.”

**Are you guys going to have to key on Carolina Panthers QB Cam Newton to make sure he doesn’t get loose running the ball?**

“We’ll see. Cam is unbelievable. He’s an unbelievable talent. So, trying to handle him and all that stuff with our rush and the way we operate, again, it’s going to be one of those deals where we’ll have a plan for him, but how big of a plan is--.”

**You’ll be prepared for him to run, but are you expecting him to do a lot of runs?**

“I expect him to be Cam. I’m sure he’s 100-percent and he’s going to be rolling like he normally does.”

**I know you’re familiar with Carolina Panthers RB Christian McCaffrey but there’s no way to know exactly how Carolina plans to use him. How do you prepare to defend him? How do you game plan this week for him?**

“You never want to chase ghosts. We have an idea of what they’re going to do. Again, we’ll keep everything within the structure of the defense. It always comes back to us. Will they use him? I’ll be a lot of money they’re going to use him in many creative ways. It’s our job to understand that it’s not about the player that’s performing. It’s about the structure of the defense and how we defend the entire field.”

**I would assume they didn’t show anything in the preseason that really popped out about how they use him?**

“No.”

**As a coach, does the season opener make you a little more nervous, just because you don’t have that one game of film from this year to kind of study, you guess a little bit?**

“No. Like I said, it always comes back to us and trying to represent the style that we are on defense. It doesn’t matter what a team throws. They’re going to throw wrenches. They get paid. So, they are going to gain yards. They might score a point. But, it always comes back to us and how much of a dog do you want to be on the football field. And you keep coming and keep coming until that whistle blows at the end of the fourth quarter. It’s our will versus theirs. How far are you willing to go further than your opponent. That’s our mindset. That’s the way we operate. We understand the way the game works. We understand they’ll have wrenches. We understand that they have an unbelievable football team. Two years ago they were the number one scoring offense in football. It’s just our mindset and our will to go further than they’re willing to. That’s the way we’re created on defense.”

**Have you gone back to watch film of how Seattle Seahawks head coach Pete Carroll and the Seahawks defense have defended this particular offense the past few years?**

“You always do. You look at your stuff. But, like we’ve said, we’re going to be different. We’re going to operate differently. We’re going to have different things that we do. We’re really excited about our plan. Now it’s a matter of just going and executing.”

**You mentioned in the preseason that Lorenzo might’ve been a little over aggressive sometimes in some of the things he was doing back there. How has he progressed in that sense throughout August and now heading into Week 1?**

“His vision’s expanding so he’s starting to see more. The more they see, the more calculated they can be back there. That’s where he’s starting to get better. When you watch a guy like [Seattle Seahawks S] Earl Thomas, one play you’re like ‘How did he, he can’t do that.’ Then the next play he’s playing the middle third and you’re like, ‘How does he-?’ He just knows. When it’s run he’s two yards in the backfield. When it’s run he’s 25 yards back playing the third. So, they get to a point where they just recognize. They’ve got great play recognition. They see the big picture and they can react much faster. That’s where he’s getting better.”

**Regarding DL Solomon Thomas, like a lot of rookies, ideally will he continue to get bigger as far as his weight? Related to that, is it a nice situation to have DL Tank Carradine and him splitting snaps because you don’t want to over-tax him?**

“Like any rookie, as he becomes a man he’s going to gain weight. I’m not concerned about his weight. He’s got such great get off and coil and strength. But, it’s like we’ve preached the entire offseason, as long as we can stay healthy everyone on that D-Line is a starter. Ideally everyone will be splitting reps. When it comes to the D-Line, they work together, all of them together to, one, to keep themselves fresh, and two, keep themselves at a dominant level of performance.”

**(Inaudible)**

“He plays his tail off. That’s first and foremost. He stands for all the right stuff. He can grind out as a three technique on those doubles. Pretty good run defender, and he’s got some quick twitch off the ball. So, he’s got that penetrating feel that we like for a three technique. We feel like he’d be a really good complement to [DL DeForest] Buckner.”

**Is that first step a top criterion for that position?**

“Penetrator. For sure.”

**Is it important at all for the offensive coordinator and the defensive coordinator to get together and kind of put together game plans that match or kind of have the same vision?**

“The vision for sure. Kyle does a great job expressing what he likes, what he wants this football team to look like. That’s one of Kyle’s greatest strengths is he’s able to capture the entire room and with one vision create what we expect to be a pretty cool picture. It’s going to be very identifiable to the fan, what this team is made of and what it’s about from a vision standpoint. Schematically, two different sides of the ball. Once we get going towards the fourth quarter in the game and he’s looking for something. He always has say-so. Head cheese. But, from a vision standpoint for sure. That’s what Kyle I think does an unbelievable job putting the team all on one page.”

**Is that something where you guys are communicating throughout the week?**

“Yeah.”

**When you talk about vision, are you talking about for a specific game or just in general?**

“Could be for a specific game. Obviously, he’s got an entire vision for the entire season. He’s very focused game week on what he’s looking for, what it takes and all the different things that he preaches to make sure we’re all on the same page and achieving one goal.”

**Which players on your defense have the quicks and bursts to cover McCaffrey man to man?**

“I feel like all of them do. It’s kind of a cliché answer, but [LB] Reuben [Foster] can, [LB NaVorro] Bowman can. Like I said, it’s not about him, it’s about us and the way we operate defensively and the things that we can do to put ourselves in a position to be successful.”

**I know you’re not focused on Carolina Panthers LB Luke Kuechly and Carolina Panthers LB Thomas Davis, but as a defensive guy do you have an appreciation for their inside linebacker talent that’ll be on the field?**

“Heck yeah. Heck yeah. I like ours better though.”

**In the draft there was talk that Carolina Panthers WR Curtis Samuel could do sort of the same things as sort of a quasi-wide receiver-running back. Have they done anything like that with him in the preseason? Do you have to be cognizant of him as well as McCaffrey in those dual roles?**

“I’m sure they’ll have something for him. I’m sure they’re going to want to feature all their guys at some point in the game. Again, it goes back to us. We’re not concerned with who they do it with. They are going to do it and we’ve got to be sound defensively.”

**McCaffrey, he’s just known for his shiftiness, just quick cuts. How do you tell your guys to tackle that? Are they watching his hips, his shoulders? He has the ability to just cut so quickly.**

“He is, he’s shifty. He’s a shifty little sucker. We have our tackling plan. We feel like we do a great job with the way we tackle. Our plan has been relayed. I won’t get into it, but we’re comfortable with what we showed the players and the plan for Sunday.”