

TRANSCRIPTIONS



**Head Coach Kyle Shanahan
Press Conference – November 15, 2019
San Francisco 49ers**

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Opening comments:

“Injuries: doubtful for the game will be [RB Matt] Breida, [K] Robbie [Gould] and [TE George] Kittle. Out is [DL] D.J. Jones, [T Joe] Staley. Questionable, [LB] Azeez [Al-Shaair], [RB Raheem] Mostert, [WR Dante] Pettis, [WR Emmanuel] Sanders and [CB Ahkello] Witherspoon.”

We think we saw Kittle working out and wearing a hoodie so we couldn’t be sure, but was this the first time that he’s been sort of doing the training on a side field while you guys are practicing?

“I don’t know, I didn’t look over there, either. I would’ve been confused with the hoodie, also. I told him to do that on purpose to mess with you guys. I saw him out there yesterday doing something on the side, so he’s been out there a little bit. Yeah, he was doing some shuttles and stuff yesterday.”

Do you see noticeable improvement?

“He’s definitely better this week than he was last week. We’ll see how these next two days go. We’ve got him doubtful because we’d rather not. I want him to be healthy throughout this year. We’ll see what happens with the other guys. Kittle won’t allow us to ever rule him out until it’s right at game time because he’s done some pretty amazing things here in the last couple of years.”

Do you almost feel like you have to protect him from himself?

“There’s no doubt about it, yeah. I mean, he played through the game two weeks ago with the same deal, so that’s why he’s a guy that you never count out. We’re trying to be smart with him, though. We’ll see how the other people doing going up to kickoff. He played two weeks ago with this, so it is always a possibility, but that’s why we’ve got him as doubtful.”

You said at the start of this week that Ahkello needed to have a full week of practice to start on Sunday. How do you feel that he’s progressed and do you expect him to start?

“Yeah, he’s done as good as he can with all the reps he’s been given. We walked through most of this week, so we didn’t give him enough because it wasn’t full speed. We had to recover from our Monday night game, but the full speed reps he’s had, he’s done very well in and that’s why I expect him to be out there. We’ll see how much.”

I know you mentioned on the radio today you wanted to give Matt Breida some time off on that ankle. Just overall, generally, with the injured guys, having three first-place teams coming up on the schedule after Sunday, does that factor into your decision making when it comes to these injured guys?

“No, not at all. I don’t look at those three games any different than I look at this week’s game. All these teams are very hard to play against in the league. You don’t think of it that way. I think of it as this injury’s been lingering with him for a little bit, it’s affected him in a number of games this year and that’s exactly what he went through all of last year. Hopefully, we’re in a situation where we can rest him, because we do have four guys that can go. We’d like to give him that rest, but if something happens to one of those other guys, he would be available to go on Sunday. That’s why we’ve got to keep him as a possibility. Hopefully, everything can work out, we can give him the rest he needs here over the next couple weeks and make sure he’s ready to go for the long haul.”

You mentioned that Ahkello will get his starting job back. Does that start this week or do you ease him back initially?

“Are you trying to trick me? He’s going to be out there this week. He is questionable, so something could happen here over the next two days where he’s not available to go, but he’s shown that we can put him out there. I’ll decide right at kickoff how long that is.”

You said on the radio that you accounted 108 yards worth of dropped passes. Did you have seven drops? I counted seven.

“I didn’t count them. I’m not sure. I didn’t count the yards either, we have a guy that’s much smarter than us involved in analytics who does all that stuff for us. That was the stat he gave us. I was just talking about how things can go and how they can get better a lot faster and it wasn’t just the drops, but there were a lot of things into it that we could’ve done better.”

When you have something like that, what’s your emphasis during the week with you receivers? I know focus, one play at a time--?

“It’s just to get your mind right. I try to tell them to go through that again. Don’t sit there and just picture everything is going to go perfect this week. Picture yourself having another drop again, know how bad that feels and then think of how you’re going to react to that because if you go out there being, ‘Man I’ve got to be perfect this week and I have another drop,’ you’re going to go into a shell the rest of the game and we’re going to need you. You’ve got to be able to go out there and play your game. People do have drops. We have good receivers who don’t drop it a ton. In terms of drops, they had a bad game last week and you’ve got to go out there and not think about that. Every game is a new week. Just because we had a lot last week, doesn’t mean, I know the first one, if you do have a first one in this game, it’ll be huge and everyone will think about last week, but that will affect how you play. You can’t worry about that stuff. Our guys have good hands, you can’t let one drop lead to another. You’ve got to go out there and be mentally very strong with it.”

Does that 108 include projected yards after the catch?

“I’d have to ask, yeah definitely. I don’t think that was just on the spot. We’re expecting run after the catch with it, but you’d have to ask our analytics guys.”

Can you explain the unique nature of Staley’s injury and why he can’t play with it?

“Yes, it was very similar to what happened to [former G Josh] Garnett in training camp. O-Lineman do play with broken fingers sometimes and dislocated ones. Staley played through the entire game versus Seattle with it because I think he did it in the first half. That’s why he had a very hard time accepting that he had to get surgery because he just wants to tape it up and go. But, when you do have a certain type of dislocation or fracture that you can’t pop back in, if that stays out for 10 days without surgery then it will stay out for life, it just forms that way and then you can’t move it and function with it. Maybe if this was the last game of the year you could do it right now and hopefully you can do it right after and you’d be in that two-day window, but if he tried to just tough it out and play with this, in about six days from now he wouldn’t be able to move his finger again. He can get the surgery, fix it, hopefully it’ll be just two games. There’s always an outside chance at one, but I’m expecting two games and then he’ll be good to go for the year.”

Is there also a risk of an infection? Is that why he can’t play?

“That’s why you can’t play right after surgery, I think. A doctor would answer that better. I know that I definitely don’t want Staley to be out. I definitely know he doesn’t want to be out. I definitely know, of course I’ll allow a player to play with a hurt finger, especially an O-Lineman if he could. I know Staley wants to, but this is something with what the doctors tell us is not an option.”

Can you say which finger it is?

“I don’t know which finger it is.”

Arizona Cardinals WR Larry Fitzgerald entered the NFL the same year you entered the NFL. Obviously, you’re kind of a wide receiver guy. What is it that has impressed you the most throughout his career?

“Just how long he’s done it. I mean, every year people want to say ‘alright, he’s going to lose a step and not going to be able to play anymore.’ It’s very hard once receivers get older and they lose a little bit, but Larry, he hasn’t lost much. I mean, of course he’s not the exact same speed he was when he came out, but he is such an amazing football player that every year he looks the same to me. I think it always starts with his hands and how aggressive he is with his hands. He doesn’t mind putting his body anywhere. They use him as one of the best blockers in this league. Even when he is covered he always can make a play. Larry has been one of the best to play the game. The way he’s handled himself, to me, I don’t know him, but he seems as cool of a guy as there is. I think he handles himself first-class. He’s had an unbelievable career and I know he can keep playing longer if he wants to.”

With K Chase McLaughlin possibly kicking in place of Robbie again, how much faith do you have in him and what did you have to talk to him about the last kick?

“I just told him how much faith we have in him. I mean, I don’t know him very well, he’s been here for a week. Watching him at practice you can see how talented he is and why

he deserves to be there, but you never know until someone gets in a game how they're going to handle the pressure. Those first three kicks he kicked were as confident of three kicks as I've seen someone have. It wasn't just that he made it, it was the way he made it, the way that ball came off his foot, the way it went right through the middle. After he missed it, the way he walked around in the locker room, he's not a guy who, to me, is just going to go into a shell. I think he's confident in his ability. I think we are too. I mean, I don't see him missing that all on his own. I see us missing that together. We definitely should have gotten it closer for him. I don't think the whole process was perfect either, not that that's an excuse for him. I think he's a guy we believe in and I think he's going to have a good career."

Has Emmanuel Sanders, the pain he's experiencing, lessened noticeably that you know of?

"Yeah, it looks like he's walking around better, sitting in the meetings better. I'm sure that's something you guys can ask him in a second, but I would guess so."

The play before the missed field goal was close, it looked like he may have gotten the first down. Did you do anything with the league to ask about that?

"Yes, I don't always do it. I try to move on. I just get frustrated. People say sorry, doesn't make me feel that good. I know [general manager] John [Lynch] talks about all that stuff and everything. You never know when it goes to replay. They've got to have a perfect view of it. So, I think everyone believes that he got the first down, but when they don't spot it that way you've got to depend on how the camera angles. If it's not 100-percent obvious, I know how it's going to be. You hope those guys get it exactly right the first time so you don't have to depend on a camera angle, but I've never had to spot a ball before from 30 yards away, looking in that mess of people, so I'm not trying to say that's easy to do either. It's just part of this game."

After the Cleveland Browns DE Myles Garrett incident last night, do you address the team at all today about sportsmanship and--?

"Yeah, we address it. Honestly, every Friday we do it around the league where we show a lot of stuff that happened. I didn't include that from last night, but yeah, we go over that stuff all the time. I've never told a player he couldn't, that he wasn't allowed to take his helmet off and hit someone with it. I think they know that. But, it is a very physical game and people go to some places that you have to control and there's a very fine line in that. We talk about that all the time. Obviously, that was something someone struggled with last night. That's something that I think everyone feels the same with, that there's no place for that in our game."