

TRANSCRIPTIONS



**Head Coach Kyle Shanahan
Press Conference – October 16, 2019
San Francisco 49ers**

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Opening comments:

“For injuries today: limited in practice will be [DL Dee] Ford, [DL] D.J. Jones, [TE George] Kittle, [WR] Deebo [Samuel] and [RB] Raheem [Mostert] and [T Joe] Staley. Staley’s going to try to do individual today. Guys who won’t practice are [CB Ahkello] Witherspoon, [T Mike] McGlinchey and [FB Kyle Juszczyk] Juice.”

How did everything come together yesterday as far as WR Emmanuel Sanders?

“[General manager] John [Lynch] has been working the phones for the last few days, seeing if anything could come up. I think he closed it out probably 20 minutes before you guys found out. I wasn’t sure if it was going to happen or not, definitely was pumped it did.”

You mentioned on Monday that you weren’t operating with more urgency than you had the last couple years. Is a veteran receiver, somebody as accomplished as him or Sanders himself, was he on your radar as somebody you were trying to get these last couple years?

“Yes, definitely. Emmanuel’s been a guy I know I’ve personally wanted since probably the last eight years, since he became a free agent at Pittsburgh. Huge fan of him coming out of the draft and everything he’s done since. We were looking into all possibilities, we didn’t know if any of them would go through. I know I answered that question the other day and I meant it. I have felt less urgency than we have in year’s past. I feel good about our group, but we do have a better team right now and we were able to make it better yesterday and pumped he’s here.”

Were you able to see enough from him during those joint practices in August to form an opinion of where he stood after that Achilles injury?

“Not totally because he was just getting back into practice and didn’t go a ton. And it was just practice. It was more a grind then. What’s been the best is being able to watch him in all his games this year and just being able to compare him to before his injury. I thought he looked healthier in these games this year than he did last year before his Achilles because I know he was playing last year real banged up before that Achilles happened. What he’s done in these five or six games, really liked how he looked on tape and that’s why I was really glad we were able to get him.”

What's the process to get him acclimated for this weekend?

"It's a cram job. We're doing a lot of stuff. He got in late last night. I know [wide receivers coach] Wes [Welker] met him over at the hotel just to review a bunch of stuff before he got in real early today. He went through install, we just went through walk through. I know he's sitting there probably eating lunch and going over the stuff now. We'll go out and practice and see how it goes and then we'll come in and watch it together and I'm sure he'll say with Wes and [offensive quality control coach] Miles [Austin] throughout the night. It's always very tough to get a guy caught up. It definitely gives us an advantage that he's got some familiarity with the offense with what he was doing in Denver. Just some of the verbiage and stuff will help get him a heads start with how to line up. Still a lot of work to do with it."

You mentioned that you've thought about Sanders over the years. Have you envisioned him at a certain position? It seems like he's played just about everywhere?

"He's got the ability to do all three of them. Wherever we fit him in, we've got kind of an idea, but we'll settle that on Sunday. Regardless of wherever we lock him in what position, he's a guy who can play outside, can play inside, can play to the tight end, can play on the open edge. He can do it all."

You mentioned that you've been eyeing Sanders for a better part of a decade and you also mentioned his familiarity with the scheme, but what about his particular skillset do you think allows him to just be able to plug in and play, especially coming against Carolina?

"I think he's always been very good at separating. He's wired in a certain way where he can get downfield, he also can break you off inside. Not the biggest guy, but he plays big. He's hard to get your hands on. He can push through things and he plays very aggressive. The game is not too big for him. He can go over the middle and not flinch. He catches the ball and gets up the field hard. He's a very good football player plus still a very good talent also."

I don't know how much you know about Denver Broncos offensive coordinator Rich Scangarello's playbook in Denver, but what will be the biggest adjustment? Is his playbook and his scheme very similar to yours?

"I'm not totally sure. I mean, I've talked to Rich, but it's different. You change words when you go to places so you've got to marry some stuff up, it meant this but it's the same thing. How they probably coach routes is different. However he sees it and his receiver coach and stuff. I'm sure it's a little bit different than us. We're a few more years into it also. Each year things build and build and it just becomes your own. I know they're in their first year and they're at the beginning of it. I'm sure it's a little bit more advanced just with how long we've been together and that's what we'll try to catch Emmanuel up on."

The move doesn't come without risk with his age and recent injury history, what you're giving up for a guy who may not be here next year. Why was it worth it in your mind and did some of those risks give you any pause?

“It always gives you pause when it comes to draft picks and everything. But, we feel he’s a guy who can come in and help us a lot this year and we’ll see where it goes for him after that. We’re very well aware that he’ll be a free agent at the end of this year and we’ll see how this year goes and hopefully we’ll be able to keep him here. Risks always go into that, but you can get guys hurt on your roster and be out of luck. When you only have seven more days or whatever it is to decide that and then you’ve got to go through the rest of the half year without it. I remember us making a decision that first year not to do it, we decided not to go through with it. Then the next day something came up with [former WR] Pierre’s [Garçon] neck and he had to go on IR basically the next day and then we had to go eight weeks without a guy. That’s just kind of what’s tough with the rule. So, you’ve kind of got to make those calculated risks before it shows. I know Emmanuel, giving up a third-round pick, hopefully that fourth-round pick won’t be much different between Denver and us and what that fifth-round pick is. With that being said, we felt good about it because we know the type of player we got and we know how much he can help us.”

Where exactly do things stand with WR Trent Taylor and WR Jalen Hurd? I know you said you were holding out hope, but is there a lot of hope?

“Not as much as there was earlier. They both had chances to come back earlier. Both of them have had setbacks which have had to start a couple things over. We haven’t ruled them out, but I’m still hoping for it. It’s not something we can for sure count on.”

How much does it say about where you believe this team is, where John believes this team is, that you’ll go out and get a guy, a veteran guy, who only has half a year remaining on his contract?

“I think it says that we’re competing this year to try to get in the playoffs. I think that’s pretty obvious with where our record is at right now, but we’re not even halfway through this year. I know we’ve got a long way to go, but this is a decision you’ve got to make before next Tuesday. With where we’re at right now, we wanted to see how much between we can make our team and I think we did as good as we could in that area without really truly making a huge risk on the future.”

Did it factor in the fact that he’s a guy who’s played in eight playoff games and a couple Super Bowls?

“I don’t really look at it like that, but it factors in that you think he’s a veteran football player who nothing’s too big for. He knows how to win, winning’s important to him. He does everything. He competes in the run game, the pass game and I’ve seen him play in a lot of big games and be the reason why that team’s won. I guess it does. But, it’s not like you just look and say, ‘I want someone who’s been in big game.’ It’s ‘I want someone who’s played big in big games and played big consistently over his career’ and that’s what Emmanuel’s always done.”

Just to be clear, do you expect him to play against the Panthers?

“Yes.”

When there was talk about you guys maybe bringing in a cornerback, trading for a cornerback, CB Richard Sherman was very outspoken saying that he wanted to ride with the guys in-house. Do you worry about how the other receivers, what the reception will be for Emmanuel and how the locker room is?

"I mean, you've always got to take the human element into it. We've got a great team and our guys work as hard as they can be and it's everyone's job also. There's not numbers for everybody. It's always when you add a new guy and everyone wants to know, what does that mean? So, you can try to talk to the guys and explain it, but it's part of our business. If you can improve your team you have a responsibility to do that as a coach, as a general manager, all of us, and we had that opportunity to do it. You don't hesitate on it. If there wouldn't have been an opportunity, we've been 6-0 with the guys we've got too so we do feel good going with our guys, but we know we added a better guy that makes us better."

Can you share who's going to see less playing time then?

"I don't know yet. Depends how the week goes."

What do you expect from the Panthers on Sunday?

"I expect to see a very good team. I mean, they've got as good of a defense as I've seen on tape this year. Reminds me a lot of ours, what they can do to the quarterback with their front four and still keep seven guys in coverage. Looking at the quarterback a lot. Playing a lot of zone defense. They are very hard to move it on down the field and they look like they have one of the top defenses. When it comes to their offense, they are running the ball as well as anyone. I think they are fifth in the league in scoring points. When you are that high in scoring points, you pair that with a good running game and a good defense, it's no surprise their record is what it is."

In 2017, who was the receiver? Was that Sanders?

"When?"

You talked about you were going to make a trade for somebody.

"Oh, we were looking into guys. There were a couple guys. Sanders wasn't available."

Their front four has been able to get pressure from a lot of different spots. How difficult is that to scheme against when they can do it with the number of guys they have?"

"It's always difficult. And it's difficult in the pass game, too. When guys can get there with four you want to get rid of it quicker, but it's harder to get rid of it quicker when there's seven guys in coverage so there's a balance there. When people blitz they can get there faster, but it's easier to get guys open. That goes hand in hand, you've got to be very balanced on offense and do a little bit of everything to kind of put them in a bind and make them do stuff that they don't want to do. Sometimes you can unlock their scheme doing it that way."

Following up on Taylor and Hurd, is it accurate that they may not physically be ready this year? Like, you won't have an option to bring them off IR, if that makes sense?

"We'll see how it keeps going. I think we will have an option, but it's been a lot longer than anticipated. There's been a couple setbacks. They had to start a couple things over. I think they are allowed to. I think Hurd's allowed to the Baltimore week. I want to say Trent might be a week earlier. And I think they can practice two weeks before that. We will see how it goes. I was a lot more optimistic earlier in the year, but there's been a few setbacks that we can't guarantee that. It's a risky thing when you are dealing with injuries and stuff. It's a risky thing to do when you've got to make a decision here by next Tuesday, where we're going to go."

Can you talk a little bit about your impressions of Carolina Panthers QB Kyle Allen?

"I think he has hopped in and done a hell of a job. He's a guy we liked a lot coming out. He's a very good thrower, plays the game very well. He's hopped in and ran their offense very well and when they've asked him to make plays he's been very accurate at throwing to their guys. If you give him time in that pocket, he can make any throw and he's involved the receivers very well."

We saw Joe working out in Washington before the game. Do you expect him to do something different this week?

"Yeah, he's going to try to do individual today. I think there's an outside chance that he'll play Sunday."

Your debut was against Carolina in 2017. How much do you view this as a measuring stick almost with a new roster, being able to face them again?

"I see every week as a measuring stick. Carolina is always a tough team. Being in that division for a couple years, having to play them twice a year, playing them the year when they were 15-1. We beat them that year, we were that one win, but we can't brag about that too hard. We got shutout like 33-0 two weeks before that also. They've always had a good team. Some of the players have changed. They still have [Carolina Panthers LB Luke] Kuechly who's as good as it gets. Even though the D-Line has changed a little bit, the results are the same. It's as good as it's always been. You've got 24 in the backfield who's as good a corner as there is. They are a very good defense and they are still running the ball very well."

Considering that Wes Welker and Emmanuel spent a pair of seasons in Denver together, was Wes someone that you guys consulted before making this move?

"Always. I mean, it always starts with the tape. You think you can have a pretty good idea on people's demeanor, personality, their character a little bit by watching how they play. But, you never know for sure. So, it was real nice to have someone in our building who's been with him. Wes was a player with him so he knew him pretty well that way. We've got [head athletic trainer] Dustin Little, who's our trainer, was the trainer out there for the whole time Emmanuel has been there. We have some guys who know him which kind of confirmed how we felt about him anyways, which makes you a lot more confident to do something like that."

You guys are calling more running plays or at least you're running the ball at the highest rate in the league. You've been playing with a lot of leads and you mentioned how you're trying to complement the way the defense is playing, but is it safe to say that if you had more confidence maybe in your receiving corps that there would be a little bit more passing plays in your offense?

"No, the way these last few weeks have gone that wouldn't have changed. That has nothing to do with the receivers. That has to do with the best way to win a game. You go into a game every week thinking about what you think the best way to win a game is. Then you get a feel each quarter. By the second half, watching our defense, the way we have run the ball, the way our quarterback and receivers, O-Line, tight ends, the way they've done on third down to keep us out there, it gets to a point in that game where you're trying not to turn it over. Our guys have done a real good job of that to where we can just run the ball. We wouldn't be running the ball if we didn't convert third downs. You can't get a bunch of runs if you go two run plays and you throw on third down and its three and out. To be able to run the ball like that and convert third downs, I think we are doing pretty well in the league with not having many three-and-outs and I think our defense is right up there one or two with the most three-and-outs. It's a very good tradeoff on how to win games and when it's not like that you've got to adjust."

The way the Panthers use Carolina Panthers RB Christian McCaffrey, do you feel like it's more because of his skillset or just their offensive scheme the way they use him all over the field?

"Both. I think he's a special player. He can do about everything. He reminds me of [former NFL RB] Marshall Faulk. He can beat you in the pass game, he can beat you in the run game. They're doing a great job on how to use him because they are using him as much as possible. Christian is, not many players you can do that with, but he has the ability to do it. You can tell he's a very smart player, extremely talented and that's why he's being mentioned with some of the best in the league this year."