

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

TRANSCRIPTIONS



**Defensive Coordinator Robert Saleh
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San Francisco 49ers
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Where do things stand with DB Adrian Colbert this week? How much was he able to do yesterday?

“He was able to go through his non-contacts. He’s got the blue jersey on, so we’re working through that part of it. Thankfully his feet and his head weren’t hurt so he’s been able to fly around, show all that speed that we’re starting to like.”

Head coach Kyle Shanahan was thinking that maybe next week would be the more realistic week to have him back. Is that what this week seems to be suggesting?

“It seems that way. But, you never know.”

LB Reuben Foster was named NFL Defensive Rookie of the Month. Did that kind of surprise you or does that kind of fall in line with what you’ve been seeing during those three games in November?

“It falls in line, for sure. When we drafted him I thought if he could stay healthy he’d be the Rookie of the Year. No question. The defense is built for linebackers to run and hit and get tackles. For him to gobble them up the way he has, it’s not a surprise. He’s a very talented, instinctual player. He’s very explosive. Sky’s the limit. He hasn’t even scratched the surface, too. If he continues going the way he has, it’s only going to get better.”

What are some of the things he needs to work on?

“The consistency. Like all rookies. Continue working his hands in block protection. These linemen get on you faster. They’re much stronger than they were in college. So, you can’t always just dip and rip. You’ve got to use your hands, create extension and get them off you. And, his footwork in the box. But other than that, just play recognition and instincts and all that stuff that comes with it. It’s going to take reps. Shoot, everyone has a little bit to improve on too. He’s going in the right direction, that’s the cool thing.”

DB Antone Exum Jr. and CB Leon Hall played almost the same amount of snaps Sunday. Is it something where you’re trying to find their skills and put them in a position to succeed or is it kind of competition for snaps going forward?

“A little bit of both. I know Leon was getting out there some because we had a little bit of a Dime package going on with Seattle too. Trying to utilize their skill sets to the best of

our ability. Also getting them both on the football field in certain situations. Exum has only been here for a couple of weeks. Leon has been a little bit longer and has played a little bit more football. One, give us a good look at Exum, and then also Leon, he's been around, he's been playing good. He knows the game so he can play really good back there."

How far back do you go when looking at the Bears offense and QB Mitchell Trubisky? Do you go back to Week 1 or do you start at the last three or four games, or how does that work?

"I watch every game. The amount that we actually give to the players may not cover that much ground, but I'll watch every game, every preseason game that he was in so you try to get as much information as you can."

How have you seen him progress from week to week? Or is he pretty much the same guy as he was when he started out the year?

"He's progressing. I do think [Chicago Bears offensive coordinator] Dowell Loggains is a really good offensive coordinator and a very good teacher. That staff, they've got some good things going on on that side of the ball. I know they may not like the results from a statistical standpoint, but I don't think stats always tell a story of where a team is going. I do think they're progressing and they are getting better. It's no different than us. We're on that same path. Our stats may not show it, but I do think we're going in the right direction. That's kind of the theme I see with them."

Where do you see it specifically from Trubisky?

"From a play standpoint, it looks like he's getting a little bit more comfortable in the pocket. He throws on schedule. When you watch him going through his reads, he's very quick to make his reads. The ball comes out of his hands pretty quick. In that regard it seems like he's being able to read and process defenses a little bit quicker."

Are you able to go back and check out the scouting reports some of the personnel department and the offensive coaches did on him leading into the Draft? Or is that too far in the rearview mirror now?

"That would probably be too far in the rearview mirror. I've not looked at those, from a college standpoint. The only college tape I saw of him was when he played against Stanford."

You mentioned Colbert's injury work affect him during the non-contact drills. How will you determine if he's ready to play on Sunday? What will be the test for him?

"It's really going to come down to the trainers, [vice president of medical services & head athletic trainer Jeff Ferguson Ferg and those guys and how stable that thumb is, to be honest with you. There's risk obviously, and whether or not how much restriction he would have with a brace on and all that stuff. That one I'm going to leave for Ferg and coach Shanahan."

How would you assess DL Cassius Marsh's play, especially in setting the edge?

"I thought he brought a lot of energy, plays with a tremendous amount of effort and grit. I thought he did a good job setting edges. He was up on [Seattle Seahawks T] Duane Brown most of the game in pass rush situations. He had some success, but Duane is one of the better ones. He's hopefully going to get another chance this week. But, he brought a lot of good things this week in terms of just the amount of energy, the work ethic and the things we stand for as a defense."

Are you settled on Reuben as WILL in base just for the rest of the season?

"If we can help it, for sure. If we can help it we'll maintain what we are on defense right now from a players standpoint. Hopefully we don't have to shuffle in anymore. [LB] Brock [Coyle] is doing a great job communicating to the defense, getting all 11 guys lined up. There's a calmness with him in there right now. He's actually playing some pretty good football, too. Between him and Reuben starting to get comfortable with each other, communicating and speaking about what they see on tape, that's starting to evolve. It's really like Week 4 for those two in my mind. So, you're only going to see them get better as the year progresses."

Has Brock in a sense kind of allowed Reuben to play faster and not think as much?

"For sure. Between Brock, [S] Eric Reid, and Reuben himself, he studies, he puts in the work too. Communicating and talking to each other is such an underrated part of this game and when you have that continuity week in and week out you only get more and more comfortable with what you're hearing from each other. With Reuben, one, getting reps for himself, and two, the communication part, being able to have just a calm pre-snap setting I guess you could say is allowing all of them to play faster. It's been good for him."

What does DL Aaron Lynch need to do to get on the field, to be active on Sundays?

"Keep working to get healthy. Keep grinding. You're going to see Aaron on the field. He had a really good day at practice yesterday. Hopefully he can stack it up again today. He's going in the right direction. He's got a great attitude and he's doing all the right things. He's just still working through what he's got. He's actually working and showing that he wants to get on the field too, so that's cool."

You said he had an issue over time. Is he having to lose weight after the injury?

"He looks like he's in pretty good shape. He looks like he's in really good shape, to be honest with you. I don't know if shape is the issue. I don't even think there is an issue. It's just him continuing to work through his ailment."

Are you saying that he will be on the field on Sunday?

"No, we're working through that also."

What have been your impressions of DL Solomon Thomas coming back last week?

“Solomon came back, again, he’s played with the same energy and effort that we’re used to. Do I think there’s a little bit of rust that he had to knock off? There is. I’m expecting some good improvement from him this week.”

You were in the Draft room when the 49ers made the trade with the Bears. What was your reaction to that trade and when they selected Solomon right after that? What were your thoughts?

“As a defensive coach, pumped. Got a hell of a ball player. Yeah, I was pumped. I’ll just give you a short answer on that one.”

What purpose does it serve when you have your defensive linemen dropping into coverage?

“For the most part, defensive linemen dropping in coverage can serve two purposes. One, when you’re trying to bring an overload to one side to overload a protection. Then the second part is when you’re trying to rush three and just kind of plug the middle of the field to eliminate any crossers or any low holes. Because in our natural three-deep defense, there’s a void in the middle. To be able to plug that part of the field on occasion. That’s basically what the main purposes are.”

Does that work for you? Obviously when it doesn’t work and there’s a defensive lineman chasing down a receiver it stands out. When that player isn’t targeted it doesn’t show up necessarily to us.

“We’ve had two interceptions on drop calls. Both [LB] Ray-Ray Armstrong’s interceptions came on drop calls. We’ve had a couple of pass breakups, a couple of third down conversions that we were able to get off the field on drop calls. But, you’re right. When it doesn’t work, it looks terrible. Last week we were inside four minutes so we ran a run stunt to see if we could create a TFL to see if we can get the ball back for our offense and [DL Ronald] Ronnie Blair gets stuck on [Seattle Seahawks TE] Jimmy Graham. Not what you want. Not what you called, but at that point in the game we needed to create something and they caught us. There’s a lot of situations where it works. There’s some where it doesn’t. It’s a high-risk, high-reward play and we’ve had some really good success and you saw last week with what happened to Ronnie, which I feel terrible for for him. But, we felt at that time inside five minutes to try to get the ball back for our offense, create, wreak havoc in the backfield and maybe we can create a turnover. Something. They caught us in a stunt.”

You seemed to rush three in that game more than you normally do. What was the reasoning behind that? Were you trying to protect your free safety who hadn’t played much?

“No. Seattle knows our three-deep scheme. They know our scheme. Just trying to plug the middle, take the middle away from [Seattle Seahawks QB] Russell [Wilson] and let pass rush lanes move on before we brought them back into the pressure. I’m not sure how many we did, to be honest. From a three-man rush standpoint, I think we’re in the bottom half of the league in terms of the amount of times we actually do it. I can’t give you the exact number, I think we’re at 19, 19th in the league, which means 18 teams

actually rush three more than we do. It was just a matter of taking away the middle of the field.”

What is your assessment of DL Elvis Dumervil’s season?

“Tremendous veteran leadership. He’s provided some juice off the edge for us. I wish we could find more opportunities for him. Unfortunately, the way the score’s been for the course of the year, he hasn’t been able to get as many opportunities. In his opportunities, he has been affective. He has had some sacks. I know he wants to kick himself. He’s had two sacks, one that was called back on a penalty and then the one Sunday that he actually had Russell in his hands and he slipped out of it. That, I’m sure he would love to have back. But, he’s been good. He’s been a tremendous help in that D-Line room too and a very good asset on the football field too.”

So, you look at his lack of snaps, are you saying it’s a function of you guys being behind?

“Yeah.”

And teams running it?

“For sure.”

What does the Bears offense try to do to you?

“Dowell Loggains, their coordinator, does a great job putting you in binds. He understands your scheme and he understands what defenses are trying to do. He’s going to stress the defense in the pass game. He’ll stress you in the run game, too. He does a very good job designing plays that puts stress on the defense. So, we’ve got to be fundamentally sound and we’ve got to be very disciplined in what we’re doing. And just play fast. It’s going to be a good challenge this week, for sure.”

QB Nick Mullens is running the scout team for you guys this week. Is he proving a nice facsimile of Trubisky?

“I like Nick man. He diced us up yesterday. He does a good job man. All those quarterbacks, they do a really good job. But Nick, he’s a professional quarterback so you’d expect nothing less from him”

He seems size-wise and movement-wise a good approximation of what you’re going to be going against this week. Is that what you see?

“Yeah, Nick’s got good zip. I can’t give you a full scouting report, but I do know we all love him. We think he does a really good job.”