

A banner featuring a close-up of several American footballs with laces, set against a dark red background with a subtle pattern of white stars. The text "SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS" is in a smaller, gold-colored font, and "TRANSCRIPTIONS" is in a larger, white, bold font.

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

TRANSCRIPTIONS



Head Coach Kyle Shanahan
Press Conference – October 9, 2017
San Francisco 49ers
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Explain the roster move you made today and what you liked about the new guy you brought in?

“You know, I know [general manager] John [Lynch] and everyone upstairs has been studying for a little bit. They liked his tape throughout the preseason and the season, not just at safety but also on special teams. They thought they could upgrade us, so we made a move.”

I know a lot of the roster decisions going into the season were maybe to get younger, not specific, but certainly with long-term in view. After five games, does it shift even more that way maybe? You see some younger players already on the field. Are you starting to say let's get a look at these guys no matter what?

“Yeah, I think it's a fair question, especially when you're 0-5. But, I think my goal right now is I try to keep perspective, I know I said that last week, too, but when you've lost four games in a row by a total of 11 points and all those being three points or less, I know that's happened two times in NFL history, first time since 1994, so I don't want to sit here and just make a ton of changes and totally go that direction. Our guys have been in it and had a chance to win all these games. I'm as disappointed as anyone that they haven't. But, I also know that we very easily could be 4-1, and I definitely think it's somewhere in the middle of both of those two. I look into all that. I would never do that just to do it, especially at this time. I'm always going to try to do what I think gives us the best chance to win, because I still think we're really into this, and I do think we have had a chance to win these games. I think we've got to keep getting better, and whether that's with younger guys, older guys, I decide that based on how practice is going and how they look every day.”

Do you like the mix with RB Carlos Hyde and RB Matt Breida? Do you imagine that's going to be like a two-back system?

“I do. I mean, I plan on going with Carlos early, and I plan on spelling him with Breida regardless, whether he's doing good or bad. Or even when he is doing good. But, Breida had a real good week of practice. We weren't out there as much as we wanted, especially early in the game, and we ended up just going with the hot hand. We felt like Breida was going better at the time. I think they ended up, I think it was like 35 plays to 33 plays, so it was pretty even. That's how it played out in that game. But, I think it'll be a different story each week.”

Are they on equal footing in terms of the depth chart?

"I mean, there's, it's kind of hard for me when people talk depth charts, but I guess just from a, Hyde is who we go with. Hyde is who I expect to be out there, and nothing has changed with that. But, it depends on the fronts we're going against, what personnel we want in, the type of practice, the week of practice, how it's looked. And that really goes for all positions. But, I definitely see Hyde as our first guy and Breida spelling him and [RB] Raheem [Mostert] after that."

Will Breida's touches increase?

"Again, it depends on the week, yeah."

We all notice when LB NaVorro Bowman is off the field. Is that something that's just strictly performance based? Did you want to look at LB Brock Coyle and how did you think Coyle played in that spot?

"It was more, we've been thinking about it since the Rams game, and it's really more what we think is best for Bo. It's also what we think is best for our team. I do strongly believe keeping Bo as fresh as possible gives him the best chance to be successful, which gives our team the best chance. Our defense has been averaging about 80 plays a game, and I think that's a little too much for him, and really all the linebackers. [LB] Ray-Ray [Armstrong] gets his plays off when we go dime every time anyway, so he's always off the field regardless when we go dime. So, went into that game planning to give Brock a couple series in there, and I think we did go with the plan with him getting two, and then Bo went out another series because of the stinger he had. But, I thought it helped us, I thought it helped Bo, and I know that's not something that any players like, but it's a decision we feel, and I think it'll help him in the long run."

Being phased out is a word that we use. I'm sure it's not one you love you hear. But, is NaVorro Bowman moving towards a spot where you're just going to play him less?

"I don't really look at it that way. I look at it what the situation is now. We think keeping him fresher will help him, which will help our team, and if it does and helps him play at a higher level, then no, the plan worked. You see how guys react to it and you watch that tape each week, you watch practice each week, you watch how their bodies recover, how it goes through a 16-game season, and it's not to phase anyone out or to go younger or to go to kind of what your original question was, it's what do we think will help the player, which helps the team, and that's what we feel is the best for us right now and kind of been leaning towards that way these last two weeks and plan on continuing that."

When LB Reuben Foster gets back and maybe that's this week maybe with Reuben, could you just see that being divided up even more, those two spots specifically?

"Yeah, we'll see how that plays out. You know, I'm excited to hopefully get Reuben back for practice on Wednesday, but by no means do I think that means he's going to play on Sunday. So, we don't want to put all that on Reuben anyways right away to get him out

there so much. We'll see how he looks, and then we'll evaluate week to week. The more guys we get healthy, the better problem that I have. There's lots of guys who I believe can help us, and we've got to put together the best package depending on who we're playing, what types of backs we're going against, what type of style offense they have, and really how it plays out through health, too, throughout the year."

I know you said you were riding the hot hand at running back, but Hyde sat out three straight series after fumbling and then seemingly missing a block in pass protection. Did either of those plays play into him not seeing the field for three straight series?

"Yeah, it all plays into it. Coaches are trying to decide fast in the heat of battle who you want to go with. I've got a lot of confidence in both of them. I've got confidence in all three of them. I feel we've got good backs on this team. But, the problem is you only get to hand the ball off to one of them. I would love for each guy to get 25 carries every game, and hopefully someday we'll do that. If we are, it means things are going very well. But, you're only going to get so many opportunities, so when you do get that hole you've got to decide who's in there, and Hyde had a couple bad plays, but nothing to make too big a deal about. But, we put Breida in and he was almost a shoestring away on two tackles, and we thought if we kept him in, eventually he'd get one. He didn't, but we thought he was pretty close."

Have you talked to Hyde since, and if so what's his attitude?

"It was great. I just met with the whole offense about an hour ago, watched everything. I didn't get to talk to him one-on-one. I don't think I had to. I think Carlos is a man. I think Carlos understands it. I know Carlos if he didn't, he would come and talk to me."

Is there anything situational about particularly DL Solomon Thomas and DL Arik Armstead not really, I mean last week certainly Solomon seemed to show up, but this game it did not seem like they were doing too much. Was there something systematically going on there or just they didn't make some plays?

"Yeah, I don't think it was anything in particular. I don't think they made as many plays as the week before. I definitely saw that on tape. I think it sounds like you guys did, too. There was nothing in particular, any reason why. Some days you have better days than others. By no means did I think they had a bad day. But, I hope for them to be impactful and I hope for them to make a big difference in the game, and it did seem like they took a little bit of a step back prior to the week before."

Where are you at and what are you thinking on the opening drive, overtime, they get to the 10 or 15-yard line, are you kind of hoping and praying something to happen at that point, and upon the interception, how quickly do you get right back into, okay, engage with whatever--?

"I mean, that whole drive you hope you go three-and-out and you get it right back, but then I started thinking of we're kind of in the opposite situation that happened last week versus Arizona. So, I'm sitting there that they're down here, let's hold them to a field goal, and then we've got to go down and score a touchdown to win this. That's my whole mindset right there is just hold them to a field goal, then Ray-Ray makes that

play, and I feel great after that. There's no doubt in my mind that we're going to go down and win that game, and we obviously didn't. We didn't get it done, so it was pretty disappointing. But, I'm thinking one time we've got to go score a touchdown to win because you think they're going to get a field goal, and then quickly it's like, all right, now we've just got to kick a field goal, let's end this."

You and John talk all the time after games and throughout the week. Who's cheering the other one up usually through this, you or him?

"I think we take turns. We both go back and forth. We play good cop, bad cop with each other all day. He usually helps me out, other times I help him out, too, a little, but he's a good guy to be able to talk to."

Hyde and Breida, what are their different skill sets?

"One guy is bigger. When you're bigger, you can, and not much is there, you can carry the load a little bit more. And one guy is a lot faster. By no means is Breida a small guy who can't break tackles like Hyde, and by no means is Hyde a slow guy who can't run away and get big runs. That's what I kind of mean it doesn't totally matter to me too much who's in. Similar to what I had in Atlanta where [Atlanta Falcons RB] Tevin [Coleman] and [Atlanta Falcons RB] Devonta [Freeman], they were different backs, but they both were good backs, so it doesn't totally matter. There's some plays in particular that's totally predicated on speed or predicated on size, that's about two to five plays a game. But, I think the differences are kind of obvious. You've got one smaller guy with speed and a bigger guy who can get downhill a little bit faster."

Who is adapting better to the outside zone scheme?

"They're both equal on that. They've both done a good job with it."

We ask you every week, QB Brian Hoyer had a nice end of game, threw well. Are you any closer to saying let's take a look at QB C.J. Beathard or is that still not on your mind?

"I think it's not just C.J., everything is on my mind. I look at it every single position. You guys talk about Carlos, you guys talk about Bo. We can talk about the quarterback. There's no position on our team where it's, 'Hey, you're starting no questions asked. We're not going to look at anything.' We evaluate everything. I know you do that every week, whether you're 5-0 or whether you're 0-5. Brian did some good things in that game. By no means was it perfect. I still expect him to play better. I expect us all to play better, expect me to coach better. C.J. is doing a good job in practice. I think he's gotten better each week, and we'll continue to do that with him, and if we feel it's the best thing for the team, the best thing for C.J. and the players around him, that's when we'll do that."

In terms of play calling distribution, you're passing the ball at one of the highest rates in the league. Was that the plan coming in, or has that been a product of the way some of the games have gone or how teams are defending you? How do you look at passing the ball some 60, 65 percent of the time?

"It's definitely not something I want to do. I always try to be in a 50/50 situation. I think one thing that's glaring when you do struggle on third down, you're not going to be out there as much, and I'm not a guy who's just going to go run, run pass. I try to get in a flow. I try to call stuff that they're not defending. In order to do that to get that balance, you've got to be successful on third down to stay out there. Our opening drive, I don't know how many plays it was, I want to guess like eight plays, but we only had one third down on it, and it was the last third down, and it's how can you keep getting and using your scheme and keeping the defense off balance if, if you don't stay on the field a lot you have a lot of three-and-outs, unless I'm going run, run, pass, and we're not having any two-minute drives, which you usually have one to two in a game, it's going to end up that way."

Your defense is allowing 3.6 yards per carry, which is good, and 5.2 yards per play, which is good, but it's really struggling on third down getting off the field, toward the bottom of the league. How do you reconcile those two things? What's the issue on third down?

"There's lots of issues, depends on what coverage we're playing. Whether it's, again, beating a man coverage, whether it's zone and not getting enough pressure on the quarterback, whether it's a penalty. You know, there's lots of things that go into it so I can't give you one answer, but I know I don't think we tackled very well in this game. I thought we defended the run nice at the beginning, but you just have one guy out of a gap and you can hold guys to two yards a carry all game, and then they get in a long one that changes everything. It was kind of the opposite for us on offense. I thought we had a couple opportunities to spring a big one and we missed it. I think we need to keep working to get more sound in our gaps, especially there on the backside, and third downs to me, we've got to get better. You've got to get better, and it's not just one area. But, we've got to cover better, we've got to find ways to get to the quarterback, and you've got to find a way to get off the field because I think we're doing pretty good in all stats for the most part except when it comes to on defense, third downs, explosives. I think there might be one other, but those are pretty big ones that change the game. No matter how good you're doing, if you don't do good on third down and you give up explosives, that'll change everything."

You mentioned evaluating positions. When you look at your cornerback situation, and obviously you've dealt with injuries and had to shuffle some guys around, but when you evaluate that, are you going to start to take a stronger look maybe at DB Jimmie Ward back at corner or back in nickel and maybe moving CB K'Waun Williams out, or how do you evaluate that situation?

"Yeah, we want to do what's best for our team, what's best for the player, and I think if you ask Jimmie himself or most coaches who study him, we truly believe Jimmie is made to be a free safety. We think he can play at an extremely high level there. He has got the ability to play corner, too. Sometimes that can be tough because if you're struggling at spots or you do have injuries, you always have him to move around. Is that the best thing for Jimmie in the long-term? Is it the best thing for us in the long-term? We don't think that, so that's why we're trying to keep him there at middle third safety because we think he has a chance to be a pretty good player for a long time there, and I

want him to continue to grow and get better there. I hope the other guys at corner can step up. Obviously when we have injuries we've got to move him just out of necessity, but I don't necessarily think that's the fairest thing to do to Jimmie. But, if we think it'll help us win games immediately and in the future, then we would definitely do it."

Is he going to get more time in case of, if a similar scenario unfolds like Sunday, is he going to get more practice time?

"I mean that's a problem that you have everywhere in the NFL. If you lose two corners or three corners in a game, not many teams dress more than five, you lose three corners in a game, it is what it is. I've lost two tackles or three tackles in a game, and we've had a tight end have to come play tackle, and by no means am I going to give our tight ends reps at tackle during practice. They have to get ready for what they do, and you have those scenarios where stuff does happen and you've got to be able to adjust, but if you're preparing in practice for that stuff to happen, that means you're probably going into a game playing a bunch of injured guys that you think it's going to happen and you're anticipating that."

You hit TE George Kittle on those two fourth down plays in that drive. Obviously the one he was the primary, maybe the only receiver, the other one I'm not sure. Do you see it in practice and say, that's what I want on a fourth down play? As the play caller, how do you get to those plays?

"No. I mean, there's lots of things that happen. Kittle was the number one if they blitzed, and they did, so he got it. If they wouldn't have, Breida would have been the number one, and if they doubled him, [WR] Pierre [Garçon] would have been."

That's on the touchdown?

"Yeah, but they doubled, we pretty much had a feeling they would double Pierre. If they didn't blitz they were going to play quarters coverage and probably double Pierre and put Breida one-on-one with the outside linebacker. If they blitzed and it was a zero look, which it was, we had a good blitz beater on the other side, so we had to get rid of the ball, and you don't have an option on that. You've got to plant and throw and you hope he runs a good route, and he did, and the safety almost made a heck of a play at the goal line, but he found a way to get in."

This team has obviously been involved with the anthem protest before you got here, but the Vice President leaving the game seems like a pretty big development there. Is that something you have to address? Is it something you ignore? How do you handle that as a coach?

"I don't think I really have to do either because it's not something, I didn't really know about it until I got asked in this thing yesterday. I don't think our players really knew until they got asked. If it was something I thought our players were really talking about it and everything, and I was hearing it all the time, then it would be something I would feel I needed to address. But, I haven't heard a player talk about it since then and the whole week before leading up to that game I hadn't heard anyone talk about what they were going to do or anything. It hasn't been too much of a discussion in our building. I know not everything always gets to the head coach, but even coming from our position

coaches or players or anyone who's around these guys, it's just not something they're talking about a ton. So, therefore I don't try to make myself hugely involved with something because obviously I go to press conferences or if you get home and you hear something from your wife or you read the internet you can get caught up in that stuff, and that's why I try to not make perception my reality, I try to stick with what's in these walls, and I don't really feel that from our players, so I don't feel a need to do either."

Obviously the players have been doing this for a while, but has it hit you that something that your players did affected the Vice President that way and the President of the United States's comments on it, that it's your players, the players that you know very well? Does that hit you at all?

"I think it could if I really got caught up in it in that exact way, but I think this has been going on for a while. I think we all can see a little bit what's going on, and I respect his opinion that it bothered him and he wanted to leave, just like I respect our players, some of our players' opinion for the reasons they want to kneel. I can understand and listen to both sides of that and get, 'Oh, that does make sense.' But, I'm not going to sit here and give my own opinion on whose opinion is right. I can understand both sides, and what I just hope for is, I think we all hope for, is eventually this comes to a point where our players don't feel a need to do that anymore because they feel good about what's going on."

Is there ever a situation where you'd go for two at the end of regulation or is your gut always to give your guys a chance in overtime?

"No, definitely. I thought about it hard. I felt pretty confident that game with our team, both sides of the ball. I felt like the longer that game lasted, I'm trying to think of the right way to say it, I felt like the better team would win, and I felt like we were. And so I just wanted to play longer. If I felt extremely fortunate to be in that game, and I felt like it was a matter of time before the other team was going to get after us, then I'd take my shot at the two and go for it, but I felt pretty confident in our team winning over the long haul."