

TRANSCRIPTIONS



**Defensive Coordinator Robert Saleh
Press Conference – August 7, 2019
San Francisco 49ers**

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Just a question about DL Nick Bosa, what happened to him?

“You know what, I’m not sure it got in the fray, but I think he’s alright. Still haven’t heard from the performance staff, but I don’t think there’s anything to worry about.”

Did CB Jason Verrett leave practice early with an injury?

“Yeah, he went to get checked on. I haven’t gotten word yet though on what ‘s going on.”

Injury aside, can you asses how Nick Bosa has been doing in training camp?

“He’s been progressing very well. I’m very pleased with him. He’s got a knack for pass rush, he’s been very good in the run game. So, at this point he’s progressing very well and we’re all very excited about him.”

With your first preseason game, what do you personally want to see in terms of development for the timetable in Week 1?

“Execution, always. When you get to that first preseason game, for the most part you are looking at the second and third groups, the guys that are really the heart and soul of the team, the guys that make up that roster. I want to see those guys execute and compete. There’s a lot of guys competing for jobs on this team and you just want to see them play fast, execute and do things the right way that they’ve been doing since OTAs. Making sure that the lights aren’t too big for them and trying to evaluate everything with regards to the back half of the roster and those guys trying to make the team.”

Are there a lot of guys who fall in that category?

“Every year, every year. I almost feel like the whole team is.”

DB Tarvarius Moore seems to be taking most of the first-string reps at free safety. A couple weeks ago you said there’s no way he’s ready to start Week 1. Do you still feel that way and how has he progressed since then?

“He’s getting a lot closer. It’s like I said, he does not lack athletic ability or anything like that. It’s just catching up in the position, with the position. He’s a smart kid so he’s learning pretty quick. When his feet are on the ground and he’s in the box or he’s in the middle of the field he’s got great physicality to him. I’m excited about the direction he’s going into and he’s making that coemption very close. He’s doing a very, very good job.”

Is the expectation still that DB Jimmie Ward will be the starting free safety Week 1 or is that to be determined?

“That’s to be determined.”

It seemed like the cornerbacks were a lot more aggressive today. CB Ahkello Witherspoon made a couple plays. Is that something you’ve been preaching on, just being more aggressive in run support?

“You know the corners, the way team’s attack our system and especially with [head coach] Kyle [Shanahan] where they’ve got those condensed splits and their crack support on safety, no matter what system you run your corners are going to have to show up. It’s great work for our guys. It’s a way a lot of other team’s try to account for our safety in the box because we do play with an eight-man front. So, it is a big emphasis every year since this entire system was created that the corners have got to be able to get up there and tackle and be disciplined in the run game along with making sure he’s got great eyes for the pass game.”

There were four plays in a row when I think QB Jimmy Garoppolo was in and there were touchdowns in the red zone. How eager are you to look at that stuff and go over it with the guys?

“I do it right off the get. A couple of them were just communication. We’re doing some new things in the red zone and it’s going to take some communication between a bunch of different guys making sure that we are all on the same page. When it clicks it looks awesome and when it doesn’t there’s great things to teach off of. So, I’m just thinking of a couple. The other ones I’ve got to see the tape to see exactly where the breakdown was.”

What was CB Richard Sherman’s message to the defense when you guys huddled when there was a break in practice?

“Sherm is an outstanding leader and his message was that we’re getting to a point in camp where it’s easy to feel sorry for yourself. But, if you want to be a champion, champions rise to every occasion. So, he wanted to see the team finish strong and that was basically the message.”

He seemed pretty upset after the four red zone touchdowns. Do you notice now that he’s feeling better that he’s being more active and holding the rest of his team to a higher standard?

“I don’t know if it’s any different than a year ago. Sherm is a great leader. Obviously, with confidence in yourself you feel like you can hold other people accountable. But, Sherm has nothing to prove when he speaks. He has a lot to prove to himself every day because he’s such a great competitor, but with his resume and all that stuff, when he speaks, people are going to listen. This year, you can feel his confidence, you can feel his energy, he’s standing taller, he’s playing faster. I don’t want to say he’s more vocal, but you can hear him. So, he’s in a good place right now and he’s got to keep going in the direction that he is.”

Has LB Fred Warner made a big leap from year one to year two?

“He’s going in that direction. He feels faster, part of it’s because he’s really sure what he’s doing. He’s bigger, he’s stronger, he’s creating knock back when he tackles or at least thuds up. So, he’s triggering a lot quicker. The quicker he goes, the more impact he’s going to have.”

Is that knock back that he’s generating one of the bigger strides he’s made since his rookie year?

“So far. He’s doing a lot of different things well, even in the pass game. That was a big emphasis coming out with all our linebackers that when we tackle, there can’t be leaky yards. Instead of it going from a third and eight opportunity, it can’t leak. We can’t give up third and five just because we’re falling back. They’ve taken the heart with the new strength crew, they’ve put on some mass and some strength. You can just feel when they thud the ball carrier stopping on a dime. It’s good so far. We’ve just got to keep going.”

What has a healthy LB Malcolm Smith done for that SAM linebacker competition? Has that just made that a really kind of crowded decision for you?

“It muddies it up, all of them. You’ve got [LB] Elijah [Lee], you’ve got [LB Dre] Greenlaw, you’ve got Malcolm, you’ve got [LB] LaRoy Reynolds, who is surging. [LB Mark] Nzeocha’s still there. [LB Demetrius] Flannigan-Fowles has been having a good camp. But, when you look at all those guys, they are competing their tails off for that spot. Having a healthy Malcolm who has experience, he’s had great success in this league, absolutely, he makes it very tough.”

When you see Greenlaw hit FB Kyle Juszczyk like that the other day, what do you think as a defensive coordinator?

“Protect the team. We’ll see what he does on Saturday. If he knocks down the Cowboy runners that way, then I’ll be a believer. In practice, the running backs aren’t always thinking that you’re going to come up there and just knock them down. He still has to climb that hurdle for me in terms of tackling and getting guys on the ground, showing that knock back.”

Can you talk about his learning curve a little bit since he’s been here?

“Greenlaw? Good learner. You’ll see him, he’s playing SAM, he’s playing WILL, so he’s going back and forth with regards to base and nickel. He’s doing a very good job understanding what his issues are within the scheme. Understanding the alignment part, that’s not completely clean, but it’s very close for a rookie. At this point in camp, you have your entire system that we can call anything at any time and he’s got to be on it. Where in a game plan, it’s much more specific, so it would be easier for him to align and do all those things once the season starts. But, for him with what we’re asking him to do, I think he’s doing a really nice job from a learning aspect.”

Even before Nick left practice today, you had DL DeForest Buckner playing almost exclusively at defensive end. Was that only because you were also without DL Arik Armstead and DL Ronald Blair III and what were your impressions of him?

“I’ve got to see the tape. I think he, on the first play of team run, he got after Juice a little bit, but I’ve got to see the tape on what he did. But yeah, it goes back to the philosophy

that [defensive line coach Kris] Kocurek has brought that there's four guys, we're going to throw you on the field and you can play any spot at any time. We're a little bit thin at D-Line right now with the injuries, but those guys are stepping up and taking care of one another to make sure that no one's getting overloaded with reps."

You've been hesitant to put him out there in the past. We've talked about Jacksonville Jaguars DE Calais Campbell and the similarities between Buckner and him, particularly with the schemes. Is it something where he could end up playing significantly more defensive end, allowing him to have more versatility?

"With what we have at defensive end, when you talk about Bosa, [DL Dee] Ford, Armstead being able to play there, [DL Solomon Thomas] Solly being able to play there, [DL Kentavious] Street being able to play there, and Buck in my opinion being one of the top interior D-Linemen in all of football, I don't know how smart it would be. Now, in third down situations you could see it and obvious passing situations you can see it, but just as a base down, as long as everyone's healthy, I don't know if it would be smart to move one of your best guys to have him go do something else when the team needs him, you know, if that makes sense to you."

Will Buckner play on Saturday?

"We haven't talked about that yet."

Assuming Verrett, whatever happened today, isn't that series, would you guys want him to play in the preseason?

"Again, we haven't talked about that one yet. We're supposed to have a meeting tonight."

What are the options that you're looking at at nickel? The last couple days you haven't had CB K'Waun Williams out there.

"So, you've got [DB] D.J. Reed [Jr.], you've got [CB] Emmanuel Moseley, [DB Greg] Mabin can go in there. They're competing. We're trying to figure out in the event that K'Waun's extended or whatever it is. It's a great opportunity for those guys to show what they can do at nickel. That is a very big deal for me in terms of how they handle it and how they play here in the next three or four weeks."

When do you start facing scouts and looks?

"With regards to Dallas and all that? We do it when we get our walk-throughs at night, when we have our group installs and you kind of see the red hats. That's us kind of, we're going through all the gymnastics of things we may see during the season, whether it's Baltimore down the road or Arizona or even Tamp Bay in Week 1. We mix and match and make sure that they're seeing everything so when we get recall in Week 1 there, they have it."

A lot has been made already this offseason about the potential for the D-Line to excel. What's your, assuming everyone's healthy, what's your perception on how true that is?

"With great expectations, I believe it's just human nature to, the great one's anyway, will rise to the level of expectations. I never put expectations with regards to stats and all that."

I don't believe in it. I believe that if you operate at your best every single day, the results that you see will be good or in the realm in which you expect anyway. For the D-Line, the expectation in my eyes is to operate at your absolute best every day with the effort, technique, discipline and violence and trust that whatever result happens will be in your favor. It is a very good group, it is very talented, it is versatile, but you can throw all that in the garbage if they don't come with that mindset every single day to get better. If they're focusing on things that they have no control over, they'll just waste their talent."