

TRANSCRIPTIONS



General Manager John Lynch & Head Coach Kyle Shanahan Press Conference – July 26, 2019 San Francisco 49ers

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Opening comments:

General Manager John Lynch: “Just starting off with some housekeeping stuff, PUP list for you guys. [RB] Jerick McKinnon will start on PUP. Jerick has had a tremendous recovery. I think about a week and a half ago he had a little flare up in his knee so we’re managing that the proper way and feel like the best course of action is to put him on PUP. We expect him back soon into camp. [TE] Garrett Celek, I think we are all aware, he had back surgery so Garrett will go on the PUP list and has the concussion test to pass but will do that once the back is cleared up. [C/G] Weston Richburg will start on PUP. He’s working hard and doing very well in his recovery. And then [DB] Jimmie Ward will start on PUP with his collarbone. He had the surgery and we expect him back a couple weeks into camp. That’s where we are on that. Other than that, great to have everybody on board, signed and ready to go for this training camp. Unless Kyle has something, we will open it up for questions.”

Head Coach Kyle Shanahan: “Go ahead, I’m good.”

Do you have the timeframes on those other PUP guys?

JL: “So Garrett, we’re thinking weeks into the season. He is a likely candidate for the in-season PUP as well just with the timing of the back surgery. Jerick we anticipate back quickly as I said. Weston, he’s really working towards Week 1, that’s the goal, whether we’ve none that all along that was the initial prognosis with him. He’s had a really good recovery, it’s one that’s had to be conservative because of the nature of the surgery so it just took some time. That’s been the goal all along and we’re hopeful, but we’ll see. And then Jimmie, about when we’re in Denver is when we expect him back.”

Has QB Jimmy Garoppolo been fully cleared?

JL: “He will be today.”

KS: “Yeah, I think their physicals are going on now, but he will be.”

Is the physical the final sort of benchmark he has to clear? Just in terms of getting fully clear is there anything else that he needs to do in your eyes?

KS: “No, he’s cleared in my mind. We’re just waiting for the semantics of going through it, which everyone has. I think all veterans started at 11 so we should get the news soon.”

Is there a specific plan for him or do you want him to go full-go?

KS: "No, full-go. I mean, he was doing seven-on-seven for all the OTAs so he's been pumped to get an offensive line in front of a defensive line so I know he's more than ready to go."

Some of your players have mentioned this and John has mentioned it. It's year three and it's time to start winning games. Do you want them to feel some pressure, do you feel some pressure that this is year three and it's time to get going here?

KS: "I've been a coach my whole life so I think, not for my whole life but a long time, and you always feel pressure as a coach. It doesn't matter whether it's year one or year three. I want our players to feel confidence and I think they do. I know I do. You go into every year confident, but there's reasons to be more confident this year than the previous two years. We've added some key guys in free agency, we're very excited about our draft picks, we feel we're much healthier right now and we feel like we've been here a few years and our players have gotten better each year, the ones that are here. I don't think it's as much pressure, I think our guys are excited to get going. I think our guys work their tails off and we're excited to play and confident to play."

JL: "Just to add to that, I think what I feel is an opportunity. I think we've put a lot of hard work in to improve our roster and I think we've been able to do that and what does that do, that gives you a chance. And that's up to us what we make of that, but you know we're better positioned. You call it pressure, you call it opportunity, I just think we're all extremely excited to kick this year off and what lies ahead."

There's a story by Bleacher Report that said you spoke to the team earlier in the offseason and put the culture stuff aside and said "It's time to win now." Can you go through what that message was and why you felt it was important to give it?

KS: "You know, there's lots of guys who have been here for a couple years going into our third year. We've got a good group of guys who work and everything and when we came here we worked very hard in our minds to build a different type of culture to turn the roster over and we feel like we've done that drastically. We're very happy with the people we have in this building, talent-wise and character-wise. That's good, we've accomplished that part. Now we need to win some games, we need to get better. I think our guys feel that, we feel that and I think that's why we added some key players that we thought would help us. But, we had a lot of work to do we felt like when we got here. Not just from the roster, but from changing the kind of feeling of how things have gone. I think we've brought in the right guys to do that. I love our team and I think that is something I said to our guys. We all like each other, we all respect each other, but we're coming back here to go to work and we can have fun together, but not everyone in this room is going to be here. There's going to be a lot of people that can play in this league that we do respect and are good guys that aren't going to be on this team a month from now. And that is the reality of this business and that is a very stressful situation for a lot of our players. That's what these 90 guys are going through. And that can be very stressful, but at the same time it's very exciting and I think that's why our guys are confident because these last couple years you could sometimes figure out in OTAs whether you were going to make the team or not and that's not the case this year. Lots of guys are going to have a hard time and that's a

good problem to have. We're going to be better from it. I know our coaches realize it and I know John and the personnel department realizes it, but most importantly I know our players realize it."

LB Kwon Alexander, he's fully cleared? What is the plan for him in the first couple weeks of camp?

KS: "We'll definitely ease him in. We don't expect him to play early in those games. I think he did it in October and had the surgery in November. He's going to be cleared here just like Jimmy. He's looked great, he's been here in the offseason working out and rehabbing, but anyone coming off an injury like that especially at his position and as late as it was, he's a little later than Jet and Jimmy, we'll definitely ease him in. We're going to ease our whole team and we're going to do reps a little bit differently this year and with some stuff we've gotten just talking to [head of player health & performance] Ben [Peterson] and [head athletic trainer] Dustin [Little] and looking at the science of some things over the last seven years. We're going to ease our whole team in, but Kwon and a few of those other guys we've mentioned, they'll be eased in even more."

Does that mean you probably won't play him or Jimmy in the exhibition season?

KS: "Yeah, those two won't play."

Speaking of that strength and training staff, I know there were a ton of injuries when we were talking at OTAs. Are you happy with the progress in general that you've seen under that new staff?

KS: "Yeah, I think we had 20 to 18 guys given not in OTAs and we've only got four guys going on PUP today, so I feel very good about that. OTAs we had as many guys out as we've had since we've been here. But, now going into training camp I feel as healthy and as deep as we've had since we've been here. So, that was the goal."

JL: "And I think just from the standpoint of some of our objectives, I think more than ever, there's thought behind everything we do. And there's people in the medical staff and strength staff working together and with that all you want to do is give yourself a chance. Injuries are part of this business and how can you best give yourself a chance and we're really proud of that group and the way they're working with our players to give them every chance to be at full health."

KS: "I think everyone knows that our injury history has not been great here over the last few years. The one thing that I firmly believe is that injuries are up to one person and that's God or whatever you believe in. But, you have to do everything possible up to that standpoint. With the group that we have and the information they have, how much they work at it, the science and the graphs and the data they collect, without a doubt and the time put on it, we know we're doing everything possible to give these guys the best change to stay healthy while still getting better and now the rest is up to the way it's supposed to be."

You talk about the science you've been learning about. Does it reinforce things you've been doing and how much does it change it?

KS: "It reinforces a lot of things. It kind of bases, in terms of reps and things like that, it really reinforces that, that you're about on the right spot. But, if you look at the history of stuff, it took me a few hours to understand these graphs and everything so I'm not trying to reexplain them, but you know when you have a low day to go to a high day and then back to low. Instead of four easy days and four hard days, there's just certain things like that where days, just over a seven-year study, where days five and eight how much different those are than days six practices 14-18. Who knows if it's just off of one year, but now that you've been able to collect this data off the last seven years and a lot of teams have been doing it there are some consistent things that you can learn things from and make adjustments and that's what we're doing."

Were there specific reasons why DL Nick Bosa and WR Deebo Samuel and their signings did not happen until yesterday?

JL: "You know, that's always one that I ask, 'why do we have to wait so long on these things?' But, it's just the way things kind of roll with that and I'm just glad they're here. I'm just glad they're here and that it's done. Every year you feel like it, but we felt like it was really important to come to this training camp as a whole and as a team and those guys were obviously critical in that. We're really pleased and happy and thankful for the job that [president of 49ers enterprises & executive vice president of football operations] Paraag [Marathe] and [director of football administration & analytics] Brian Hampton did to get those deals consummated along with they're representatives, along with our whole rookie class."

You also have K Robbie Gould signed which has got to be a relief.

JL: "Yes, I told you he'd be here Week 1. We took some twists and turns in between there, but you know Robbie's earned it. I remember when I was playing, my agent said 'Hey, you want to make a lot of money, make yourself irreplaceable and be really good at what you do.' And Robbie's been that. It was just finding where we could arrive at common ground and find that deal. It took some time and it was frustrating at times, but the great thing is seeing him here today and giving him a big hug and saying let's go to work. That's what we're all here to do and Robbie's a big part of this and we're hoping he's making a lot of big kicks to make us successful this year and years to come."

I don't think you guys have had a presser since there was a report that there was friction in your relationship. You guys look great together, but can you talk about your distain or love for each other and how that relationship is evolving?

JL: "You know, we drive into work every day together. No, it is what it is. The only thing I'll say is that I think the respect continues to grow in what we're doing. With time, you try to improve on everything you do and what I can assure people is that number one, we really do like each other, and number two, more importantly in our roles we communicate really well and we communicate real well on every facet of this football team and that's fun. It's fun to work with someone you believe in and I'll leave it at that."

KS: "For anyone who questions are relationship, it's the stupidest thing ever. Hang around us. It's kind of a joke."

In another report there was a mention of discontent perhaps from some holdover scouts on your personnel staff, with the process and getting overruled which I'm sure happens a lot, but do you think there is some issue of tension or the way this process works? Are there people on your staff who don't like it here?

JL: "No, I think we have a really good process going. And I can't speak for people that aren't here anymore, but I know that change is never 100-percent comfortable. I think the way we chose to do this may be different from some others, it's the way we think is best. Ultimately, I think one thing we're really proud of is that we try to surround ourselves with a really good team. We really pride ourselves on listening to everyone and everyone's voices being heard and ultimately two people have been charged with making decisions to give this team the best opportunity to win and that's Kyle and myself and that's the way it is. I think it's what I feel and what our scouts feel are very harmonious and I think we feel really good about the process. Like I said, change is never easy so sometimes things are different, but I think we are in a really good place."

KS: "Yeah, I've been in a lot of buildings and more people have a voice in here than any place I've ever been in. But ultimately, you've got to take in a lot of information and when it comes down to it, in every building, one or possibly two people get to make a decision and in our building John and I ultimately have to do that. We listen to everyone, we take a lot in, but that's the NFL, I get it. I remember being a quality control working 18 hours a day and being very upset when [Oakland Raiders head coach] Jon Gruden didn't use the play I gave him and I was pissed about it. But, I also knew he was the head coach and the play caller and that's the way it is and I had a job to do and that's how this league works. You try to work your way up and you try to do as good as you can and always put yourself in every position. But ultimately, someone has that spot that has to make that and if we ever make a decision that 100-percent of our building is on the same page with then I think we have some phony people in the building, that never happens. You are going to always have people disagree. But ultimately, you've got to come to a decision. We explain to people that decision more than anyone and if people have a problem with that then I'm glad they're in another building."

You did mention the first report, now this one. Is there any worry that there are leaks in this building or people who are unhappy?

KS: "I've been in a lot of buildings, so when you have 200 to 500 people whatever it is that work in a building there's always going to be some people who talk. But, to be here three years I feel out of anywhere I've ever been there's been as few leaks out here as anywhere. And I think before we got here there were a little bit more. So, I'm very proud of that here. To go through this entire offseason, and sounds like there's been two stories that have been negative towards us and both of them come from the exact same spot, that to me is a person who is not here, yeah I feel pretty good about that. I don't think everyone would write that stuff, but some people do choose to and the credibility of that, I've been a lot of places and there are 32 of them and I'm extremely proud of the few amount of leaks that we have in here and the way we've done stuff."

You haven't had the chance yet to see Jimmy play a full 16 game season. How important is this season for you guys to get that sample size and to evaluate both his place with the franchise and the future of that position?

KS: "Very important. We were so excited to get Jimmy very sporadically at the end of that trade deadline our first year and to throw him into a tough position. We didn't expect him to play the way he did there and the way he played was great. Then to go through that offseason with him and slow things down a little bit and to come out really when it was starting and our team, we struggled a little bit. I mean, we were 1-1 in our first two games and got down about a 30-point deficit in our third game where he did do a good job in the second half bringing us back within a touchdown and then he had the horrible injury. So, I was really looking forward to last year knowing that Jimmy hadn't played a lot of ball, but he had showed everyone the capability he has to be a very good quarterback and I was really looking forward to going through a whole year with him where we all knew he would have some ups and downs, but he had the ability and the mentality that you knew he would continue to climb. And he missed that year. That is what it is and now he's done the work to be healthy and we're back to this, but Jimmy hasn't played a lot of football. I think everyone knows he's a good player and knows he's talented, but we've got to go through some situations and go through playing the position. I'm just so pumped that he's healthy again and now he can start practicing fully and start trying to prepare him for that moment Week 1."

Beyond Jimmy and LB Kwon Alexander, is there anyone else you know won't play in the preseason?

KS: "We haven't fully decided. I mean, we'd like them to play in the preseason. He was just asking Week 1, so they wouldn't be there Week 1. We haven't decided on all of that. We haven't eliminated anyone from the preseason."

That's the preseason opener you're talking about, Garoppolo and Kwon?

KS: "Yep."

How would you characterize Jimmy's leadership ability?

KS: "Jimmy, when he's been in there, I think he's done a great job. I think Jimmy's always himself. He never tries to be someone he's not. I think the guys enjoy him as a person. I think when he got here, the guys really rallied around him, just the way he carried himself. When you have the talent he has too, the guys respect that. I think our team really rallied around him in those five games that he won. He had them going into the offseason taking them into the new year. Always when you get hurt, just like Jet had to go through, it can be a little bit of a depressing factor because you're there with the team every day and then you've got to go through your own mental deal with the injury that's so big and then you've got to be rehabbing and you're never in the meetings right away or on the field, so you get somewhat a little bit distant. By the end of the year, Jimmy was back in there, helping out the quarterbacks, being around the team and I think it was really pivotal for him these OTAs to be able to be involved in every practice where he got cleared for seven-on-seven because when he's out there, he's one of our leaders and the guys rally around him."

Assuming Weston makes it back, you're going to have all five linemen. How important is that in the continuity of what you're trying to build offensively to return all five of those starters?

KS: "I think it's always very important. I mean, O-Line as a position out of anything, it's five guys moving together. You always want the most talented people. But, it's very important to get those guys working together. I'd say they're more like a basketball group than anything because the combination blocks they have, it's five guys in motion all the time, kind of moving continuously with the running backs. Those guys have to play together a lot. They're also guys that do some of the most physical things day in and day out. You've got to have some depth there, too, so you get some of that rhythm with other guys now. You hope your backups are going to be consistent, too, so if you do hurt a guy, you don't have to bring in a guy off the street. Our guys battled through a lot last year, played through a lot of injuries and were able to stay out there almost the whole year, so I was real impressed with our O-Line last year. They're coming back healthy this year and I'm expecting some of these guys who didn't play last year to really push these guys, too."

What has DL Nick Bosa missed? Where is he behind in terms of just having missed - how far behind is he and what do you want to see out of him in the first?

KS: "I mean, it was just two years ago that he wouldn't have been allowed to go to OTAs. You know [DL] Solomon [Thomas] wasn't allowed to go to OTAs, neither was [WR Kendrick] Bourne, when they had the graduation thing with the NFL. You always want them to go to OTAs as a rookie, because you kind of throw a lot at them, but you don't judge guys in OTAs, especially rookies. They kind of just learn the playbook, they're around, they do a few things, they get away, they come back and it's their time to go. Bosa got hurt the first day, so he wasn't able to do the practice, but at least he was around here. He's more ahead of guys like Solomon and stuff who couldn't even sit and be in our meetings. He's got to do everything except rush the passer, and rushing the passer is something he's done his whole life. Now he's just got to get back in to practice, get used to going against NFL O-linemen and that stuff. I don't really consider him behind."

CB Richard Sherman said on social media that he expects this to be his best year yet. Physically, from what you've seen, do you think he's ready to maintain his prime?

KS: "I've only seen Sherm in practice last year, and I know he didn't get to do anything last offseason. Anytime a player is just rehabbing all offseason, and then they come to camp and usually they tweak a couple things early in camp, so then you've got to just get to camp. I mean, Sherm was battling all last year just to be able to play. For him to come this year and be totally healthy, where day one he wasn't rehabbing, he was in the strength and conditioning program and working out, now we get to see how he probably has always looked. I think he played, got through the year playing well, but he wasn't as healthy as he has been. The guy that I see right now is a much better athlete than the guy I saw last year, stronger, bigger, faster, healthier. I assume that's more how he looked the years before."

JL: "I think, looking back in retrospect to Richard, I just think it really speaks to his mental toughness and physical toughness, what he was able to fight through. Now we look back

and see him moving, but he was dealing with both legs and those are pretty important at the position he plays. Like Kyle talked, and the distinction between recovering from an injury and then being healthy and honing your craft, and even at Sherm's experience, you've got to be able to hone your craft in the offseason. So, what we've seen is a guy who's been able to really improve himself, even at the end of this offseason, his weight kind of came down to where he typically was, so he's just been - I think we're going to see the Richard Sherman that we saw for years, and that's exciting for all of us."

You guys kind of alluded to this earlier, but what are the key elements of the new structure of the strength and conditioning and medical staff that has you guys excited about the ability to stay healthy or healthier through the course of the season?

JL: "I think what we were looking for, and this isn't anything about the past, but number one, there's a culture in the NFL that's existed for a long time where the strength staff is kind of the strength staff and you don't tell them what to do and the training room's over here. We wanted one that was working hand in hand together to allow our players to be at optimal level. That was a goal and we felt having someone over the top is the best way to do that. That's where the search for what ultimately, [head of player health & performance] Ben Peterson, took that role, was there. But, it was much more than that. I think that and just the thought of, like I said, not just doing things because your instinct is their good, let's have some data and some proof behind that. There's been a big movement in other sports and it just makes sense. Why wouldn't you embrace that? I think we've taken a little bit more of that approach and I really credit Kyle and his coaching staff. There's some new thoughts that a lot of coaches would say, 'I'm a football coach, I'm not doing that. We've always done it this way.' We're working together to try to do some things and all you're trying to do in a league that's set up for parity, how do you separate yourself a little? I think a big part of this is our injury history, but this is just how - also, not only staying healthy, but how do we peak at the right time? How do we get our team right? We're going to Tampa Week 1, and we're dealing with heat and humidity. We've got some back-to-back East Coast. Let's put some thought into everything that we do so we can be at optimal health and optimal performance each and every week and for each and every player. I think they're doing a really nice job of doing that."

KS: I think the hardest conundrum for everybody, and definitely for a coach listening to these guys and trying to make a decision, is if a guy is hurting, what way could you guarantee he won't get hurt before Sunday? Just sit there and rest. If my job was to just get him healthy for Sunday, I promise you I would do my job if I just sat him down next to me and told him not to do anything. He's healthy. And if you're team's healthy, you have a very good chance to win. Also, thinking on this train, it is so physically taxing on you to play a football game. How much you have to run, how good these athletes are to compete that if you just sit there and rest, now you go out there and you just start running and you haven't been conditioned the right way from a strength and conditioning coach, you haven't practiced the right way where you're position coach or your coordinator hasn't given you the right reps to go in, I promise you, you're going to pull your hamstring within the first 14 plays or anytime you get in an awkward position. What's more important? It's very tough. You've got to kind of guess and balance it all, so it makes it a lot. I promise

you, the strength coach, usually if you ask him, thinks it's more important that, 'Man, we've got to get that guy in shape so he's a machine.' And I promise the other guy is like, 'Yeah, but be delicate,' and then it's which one? It's both. You've have to do a little bit of both. Sometimes, you have to do more of that, sometimes you have to do more of that. Well, what day? When do you do that? Do you do it in training camp? Do you do it in OTAs? Do you do it on Friday? Thursday? Wednesday? We could read science books all day and you'll just get so many answers you'll just be confused and feel dumber than before you read it. You've got to take everything in. And all the science stuff, yeah, that is a fact, but we do need to get better in this area, too. As a coach, you've got to do your best to just talk to everyone and blend it together and feel like you're doing your responsibility of making the Niners the best they can be and the way the Niners will be the best we can be is that one, we're healthy. But two, we're good at football. So that's two conflicting things. That will never change, but that's what everyone is trying to figure out. Also, a huge thing is you don't play football very much. I watch basketball players, they play basketball all year. They're done a month after the season or whatever, you see guys go play pickup games, you see Vegas and leagues. They play basketball all the time. If you just run and stuff for 12 months and then all of a sudden, you go play basketball, I bet a lot of guys get hurt. But they do it every day. Their bodies get used to it. You can't play football year-round, it's just a different sport. If you could, we'd need more people, but maybe your body would get used to it. That's the hard thing with this sport and it will always be, especially when you add in some of these offseason rules and stuff."

There's a couple of examples from last year of guys playing through stuff that appeared to be pretty serious. Washington Redskins LB Reuben Foster with his shoulder and then Westcon, I guess, with the knee. Has the standard for that with this new staff changed in any way?

KS: "No, I think that standard is the same that it's always been. I mean, you don't play through stuff that you think is going to hurt you, like hurt your career. That's not an option. Yeah, you have players who try to do that, and then it's our job to shut them down. Guys who, 'Hey, you've got to get this regardless no matter what, you can do it right now in November, or you can do it in January after the season and then you meet with doctors, not myself, not John.' You meet with people and then they get second opinions, like 'Alright, what's the issue? Can it get worse if I play on it? Alright, it can. No, it'll hurt. Well how bad does it hurt? If it hurts, does that mean that my shoulder can never get good and I'm not gonna be as good next year?' Those are all the things that we talk about, and when it's, 'Hey, you can't make this any worse. It might be painful, but you can't make it any worse, then it's up to the player.' But, if someone's ever going to say, 'Give us, the player the report, myself, John, hey he's hurt. He maybe could go, but if he keeps going without the surgery, it could affect him next year,' then there's no discussion to be had. That's the difference to me between the old saying of hurt and injured."

Obviously, last year defensively, the results were what they were. Why make significant changes? It seems like you're making schematic changes at basically every level of the defense. Why make those changes versus, for continuity sake, keep things similar to allow guys to develop?

KS: "Like what schematic changes?"

More wide-nine, three linebackers, and then the safeties are going to be interchangeable?

KS: "Wide-nine, like we played with it a lot last year, if you look at any nickel defense, because there's not a fullback in the backfield, [CB] K'Waun's [Williams] walked out over the top of them. If that was a fullback in the backfield, K'Waun would come in and be on the ball or in the box. That would be the exact same as last year. A six-technique is head up on the tight end. A nine-technique is just on his outside eye. We used to only keep [S Jaquiski] Tartt in the box, but we think both of our guys can do it, so why don't we just rock and roll with motions and stuff. That's not really a scheme change. I think the safety change is more playing to our personnel. I think the nine-technique is playing more pass rush even in run situations and trying to get better at that. But, from a schematic standpoint, our foundation is still cover-three, it's still the same in that way. It gives you more ways to attack people. There aren't really any big changes. It gives you more, to me, weapons in your arsenal. It's not always the same thing. We don't have to play a nine. What if a team is scheming up, I mean you guys have told the whole world we're playing nine's every second. Just joking, so have I. So, I have a feeling people are going to have some plays for a nine-technique and if they're setting up all our nine-techniques, I promise you, we won't just sit there in a nine-technique. We'll move to a six-technique, and you do that throughout the game. That's just, you motion the tight end, now there isn't a nine-technique, the tight end's off the ball and the nine-technique plays the tackle, so it's like, I know it's a word that is different, but it's not that different."

When you talk about the safeties, you mentioned Tartt, are you talking about Ward or DB Adrian Colbert?

KS: "Well, when we first started OTAs and they were healthy, we had Tartt and Ward out there, so that was the first way we were practicing in. Just mentioning those two people, that was the basis of our thought process. We have everyone practicing in that way. We'll decide if we want to do it that way. It's a very easy change to that. When a guy motions, do you want to do that or do you want to do that. We can change that at any time. The fact that Jimmie Ward is built like a free safety, but just wants to hit everybody, sometimes we can give him a chance to play like a strong safety. The fact that Tartt is built like a strong safety and doesn't mind hitting, but when he plays free safety, he plays just as good also. That kind of gives you some choices. You've got two guys who can also cover tight ends. That's how we felt going into OTAs. We know Jimmie broke his collarbone, he should be back by Denver, and we'll see how the other guys play out, but Week 1, we'll see. I don't want to tell Tampa Bay whether or not we're going to rock and roll them or keep them in the middle."

Do you have any concerns with Jimmie, with the injury history, to put him in a position where he's going to be hitting more?

KS: "Yeah, but the problem is, sometimes you rock and roll him and you put him down in the box and it's a pass play and he's covering the tight end the whole time. Or you're in the middle of the field and you do have to hit people. I mean, that's the eraser. Anytime someone gets through there, he's it. Anytime someone runs a slant or skinny post, he's the one going to meet those guys, and that's where he has gotten hurt. Yeah, that's why

Jimmie is a free safety. But, there's no difference between a nickel back and a strong safety. I mean, K'Waun is on the other side of Tartt. Are you over a tight end or are you over a receiver? But, you still have to tackle that running back if he runs to you."

Obviously, you guys have invested a lot in that defensive line that's created big expectations for that group. What are your expectations for that group and how do you see them kind of embracing those expectations?

JL: "I want them to wreak havoc on the league. I think we're excited about bringing these guys and also adding a tremendous coach in [defensive line coach] Kris Kocurek along with [pass rush specialist] Chris Kiffin. To really get the most out of the group that really has to play at a high level for us, a lot of our resources have gone there because Kyle and I both believe that you've got to hit the quarterback and you've got to bring him down. I'm more excited than any other time in our time being here with our ability to do that because of some of the moves that we've made and just what I saw in the offseason. The development of some of our players, the depth of our unit. We can come at you in waves. I think we've got guys that can consistently win as well. I think some of the moves we've made, [DL] Dee [Ford] and Nick, are going to highlight and allow guys like [DL DeForest Buckner] Buck and [DL Arik] Armstead and [DL Solomon Thomas] Solly to really start to put their talents to use, as well. It's going to be a little pick your poison. Who do you want to double? That's fun. Now, they've got to go and do it, though. Like I said, we've given ourselves an opportunity, and that's a prideful group. I've got full confidence that they will."

You said they're a prideful group. Do you get the sense that they understand the pressure is there and they're embracing it?

JL: "Yeah, I know they do. I know the coach that they're playing for won't let them live a day without thinking about that and having that a part of their mindset. The total combination there excites me."

KS: "The cool thing is everyone understands the pressure of the question you asked, especially the D-Line. They know that. They know that right away. Guys know that when they get drafted. The cool thing is watching through OTAs and watching the confidence that they personally have and how good they think they are, so they're pumped for that pressure. Like the question earlier, they're extremely confident. They believe they can live up to that pressure, which makes it fun."

What's your early outlook right now having three or four starting caliber running backs?

KS: "It's a good outlook. I like it. You can never have too much. We made a commitment to Jet two years ago to come in here and be our starting running back. We had to decide between him and [Kansas City Chiefs RB] Carlos [Hyde] and we went with Jet and we were excited about that and he had such an unfortunate injury and we had to go the year without him. We were very excited with [RB Matt] Breida as a backup going into that year and he filled in great as starter. But, he got banged up all year. We ended up having to go with our practice squad guys and play with four backs and now we have four to start with that are starting-caliber guys and we used four last year. So, the fact that we have

four on our roster now is a very good thing to have. You know, it's tough for some of those guys because there's always going to be some type of odd man out. It's very hard to use four guys in a game, sometimes it's hard to dress four guys in a game. You can play three, but you've also got to have one that's very good at special teams. So, I'm glad we have some depth. Those guys are a very close group. They work as hard as any group that we have in our building and we'll see how it plays out. I think it's nice for Jet just being able to, you know, Jet has worked harder than anyone I could have ever seen to come back from this injury. Just for us to be able to be patient with him because we have some other guys. I know he doesn't want us to because he wants to get out there so fast, but it's nice that we can. I expect Jet to be good to go soon and I think he'll be there for Week 1. But, it's so nice that if just maybe not, that you do have some other guys where the pressure is not all on you, where he felt like it was a little bit last year. Now Breida has a lot more experience and played at a high level. We know what [RB] Tevin Coleman's done in Atlanta. [RB] Raheem [Mostert] got some playing time last year before he got hurt and he's always been good at special teams, but the way he played in Green Bay, he showed that he can be an effective running back in this league. It's a very fun thing to have. It'll be tough on those guys, but it'll work itself out."

Is CB Jason Verrett good to go? What's the plan for him?

JL: "He's been tremendous. Jason's done awesome. I think our staff has done a tremendous job with him. He's coming off the Achilles, his latest injury, but taking a holistic approach to let's attack his whole body and give him the best opportunity to go out there and do what he does. We looked at that risk-reward and the risk was small, the reward potentially, if we get the Jason Verrett, that can be out there and be healthy is a very good football player that will make us better. We're very excited that he's feeling healthy. I think there will be some management of him. Obviously, you don't want to throw a guy like that out there in terms up reps, but we're kind of doing that with the whole team and we're excited about Jason."

KS: "The cool thing about Jason is with his injury history, if we didn't know that and we just talked to the doctors right now and how he looks now, you would think that guy's 100-percent healthy, throw him out there right now with no restrictions. Where you got Kwon coming back a little slower, and Jet like that from their injuries. But, Jason did it longer ago, he is 100-percent healthy, we've just got to be smart with him because we all know there's a history there. But, the way he looks right now, you wouldn't know that. He's put the work in and I'm pumped for him to be in this situation and we're going to have to protect him from himself more than anything."

When you said flare up for McKinnon, did that require any procedure?

JL: "Just managing it. Jet is a guy that you give him something and he's going to do that and 10 other things. Everybody came to the conclusion that a week off after a year of rehabbing is not the worst thing in the world and hopefully that gives him some juice in those legs and so kind of slowing him down, getting him off his legs for a little and then ramping him back up. We're not just going to throw him back up in there after we rest him for a week. So, ramp him back up so that he's ready to hit full stride, but he's had a tremendous rehab."

KS: "He's the furthest ahead in the PUP guys. Ward would be second. Richburg third, Celek is for sure going to be after week six."

JL: "One other transaction for you guys, were signing, I don't know if it's out there, [C/G] Dillon Day. It just got done so it's out there. Dillon Day is center, center-guard, he has center-guard flex and likely to, we're having a tight end workout here and likely to pick up one more tight end just to give us one more body there."