

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

TRANSCRIPTIONS



Head Coach Kyle Shanahan
Press Conference – May 23, 2017
San Francisco 49ers
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What was your overall assessment of how everything went today?

“It was alright. It was day two of OTAs. We put in a few more things as you do each day. So, a few more busts than I would have like, but it’s part of the process. Each day you put in a little bit more, it all starts to blend together. It will be harder two days from now, but I was excited with how hard the guys went.”

Is the defense ahead of the offense right now?

“I don’t think so. I think it’s two teams learning a bunch. I would say without watching the film that they had a better day today. I thought it was pretty close yesterday. I wouldn’t say either one is ahead.”

You had a couple of guys rotating through the offensive line. The first team, two right tackles, two right guards, centers. Is that the goal this offseason, to have two guys sort of vying for each of the starting spots?

“Yeah, you would like that at every position. Competition brings out the best in everyone. All we have to go off of is watching tape from what they’ve had in the past. We want to balance everyone out, give everyone opportunities at each position. We need to see for ourselves, doing what we’re asking them to do, the techniques and the schemes and find out what the best place is for guys. There’s a number of guys we’re moving around.”

Coming into a week like this, what are your number one and two markers in terms of success or not?

“Not getting anyone hurt would be the first success, and then just teaching everyone. Just from a coaching staff, you look forward to this because you’re able to go on the field with them in the first minicamp, which is a voluntary one, but only new coaches are allowed that, so you go on the field with guys and you haven’t worked enough to really judge them too much. We put in a bunch of work here through phase one and phase two. We’ve had three weeks on the field now before yesterday, before we could go against each other. We were kind of getting sick of doing that, so we were excited for yesterday just to go against each other, compete and it’s really the first time we can evaluate from a fair perspective.”

What do you have LB Rueben Foster doing and how are the mental reps coming

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along?

"I think they've been great. Rueben, everything out there he's got to watch. We've allowed him to participate in anything that there's no possibility of contact. So, if he's doing any of the individual drills and not going against people, then he's able to do everything because he can run and do it all. He just, we've got to be able to avoid collisions right now. He's trying to stay locked in. I know it's hard for him. He wants to run around out there, but he can't do it. We've got to be smart with it. We can't set him back."

You had pretty much perfect attendance for the guys who still have college commitments. Obviously you wanted that anyway, but with these being voluntary how helpful is it when you're trying to start building something to have everyone?

"I think it's huge. It's something you can't necessarily control, but you've definitely got to try to get the right people who it's important too. I think it's very hard to build a team when your team isn't there. It's one sport that you can practice individually and maybe make yourself bigger, faster, stronger, but on both sides of the ball, it's 11 guys playing together. The only way to get better playing together is to be together. It is something that is very important."

You guys issued that release after that report came out that LB NaVorro Bowman was on the trade block. Is that a conversation that you needed to have with him and address that?

"I didn't because he felt good with it. I know [general manager] John [Lynch] talked to him and I thought he was going to come talk to me, but after he talked to John about it there was nothing to worry about. He understood it all and realized it wasn't the truth. There was no need to really talk personally about it."

Were trade discussions initiated by other teams regarding NaVorro?

"No. No, the only trade discussions we had was when another team asked us about [TE] Vance [McDonald] on draft day. And after a team asked us about Vance then we asked other teams if they'd be interested in that same thing. When it came to NaVorro or any other player on our team, no one's asked and we haven't either."

How did NaVorro look out there physically to you?

"I thought he's looked real good, kind of what I told you guys the last time I spoke with you. Anytime you're coming off an Achilles you're waiting for him to ease into it and from what I've seen just watching him, I would have never known that just by watching him. He looks like the guys I've seen on tape over the years."

Is QB Matt Barkley locked in as the number two or is there a chance QB C.J. Beathard can beat him out throughout preseason?

"There's a chance for everybody. Nobody is locked in at anything. He took all the two reps today and yesterday and we didn't balance them out. I'd be surprised if that stayed that way all the way through up to the season. But, yeah, no one's locked in for anything. We're going to always play the best guy."

This may seem like sort of a naive question, but I'll ask you anyway. How do you decide what plays to run in the drills?

"It's about trying to teach a foundation of a system that you know will carry you throughout the whole year. So, you're trying to build the foundation of your blocking schemes, your pass patterns, how you tie them together, the stuff off of them. It's a day-by-day process. We break down our offensive scheme into seven days, so each day we put in a group of runs, a group of passes, all types of passes and you just build it for seven days. After seven days then you kind of have the foundation of your offense. It doesn't mean you're going to run those exact plays, but it's going to be something like it. It depends what you see on tape each week. It's kind of tough because you're not really trying to scheme against your own defense. You're trying to teach plays. So, we're going against a lot of cover three out there. Sometimes you're running quarter plays, but you've got to teach your guys sometimes. You don't want to teach them in Week 12 on a Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, when you're going half speed getting ready for a game. It's how do you build your guys to how you think you're going to use them throughout the year by teaching them that technique, which to me, the only way you get good at technique is doing stuff over and over again. Yet, still competitively, you want to try to scheme the defense a little bit and have some success."

How do you kind of assess the situation you guys have at WILL, where you went out and you targeted LB Malcolm Smith and gave him some pretty good money and then the number three guy on your draft board is somebody you ended up with too. How do you envision that situation playing out?

"I really try not to envision it too hard, because I see a lot of good players there and you go into the year and the offseason, you know Bo is coming off an injury, you lost some free agents, you know we've got to add players to that and you've got to do it in the process of what's allowed, starting with free agency, going into the draft. You don't know what's going to happen. Also, you don't know how well Bo is coming back or when it will take. Seeing Bo out here and how healthy he's been, knowing we added some good free agents, and the way the draft worked out, having a linebacker we had ranked very highly fall to us at the end of the first round, we got a lot better pretty fast. When you ask me about how is it going to play out, I'm not sure and it's a good problem to have. It's something that you would actually like to have at every position. There's going to be, in my opinion, there's going to be a very good player that's not out there all the time and that's not a bad thing. That makes the two guys that are out there go a lot harder and play better. It makes your special teams better and it allows you to survive injuries, which almost always happen."

It looks like DB Jimmie Ward is adapting OK to free safety. Is that something that you might not really get a true gauge on until you're in games?

"Yeah, I think safeties, running backs, you never totally know until they're hitting. Running backs are having to run through arm tackles. Safeties are having to finish it and take them to the ground. So, you never truly know until the full pads come on and you're actually in a preseason game because we'll never fully tackle here. We'll find that out in games. But, Jimmie, from what I've seen of his college tape and how he's played

nickel, how he's played corner, he's not a guy I'm too worried about tackling. So, I'm looking forward to it."

Speaking of the running backs, what exactly are you assessing from them in a setting like this?

"Well, we go pretty hard and there's guys who play their gaps. You want to see, there's an art to hitting the right gap and running full speed and going to where the guy and the defense is out of position. I always joke with the backs, I can see it every time when I have a remote in my hand and it's very slow and I can be, 'Oh, you should have gone there.' No one plays running back with a remote in their hand. They just run and it comes natural. So, you try to see who naturally runs to the right spots and there's guys who aren't the most flashy running backs to the naked eye, but for some reason they have better yards-per-carry than everyone else does and that's because they get to the right hole and it's always four yards, six yards in. Whatever the defense, whatever the offense blocks it for they usually get two more. We try to see who the most natural runners are, who it's not too big for and their conditioning and how hard they go."

Another Bowman question. He's not used to being in a competition. He's always been the obvious starter. Have you or John had to talk to him about, 'Hey, you're in a competition now,' or has he just accepted that and understood the situation?

"You never know how a player is going to react to that especially when you have someone who has had a ton of success in his career. I remember after we drafted Rueben, out of respect to Bo, I gave him a call that night and asked him to come in and talk to me. Bo was like, 'Coach, I'm good. I'm out golfing and it's no problem. I'll see you at work.' He ended up coming in. Bo got it. He wasn't too worried about it, so he made it very easy. Sometimes guys do and you want to explain to them really exactly what I just explained to you guys. But, you never know until you do it. The way Bo has handled it, I think it will bring out the best in him. He's going for it as hard as anyone I've seen. He started doing that before we got here, or actually before we were allowed to work with them. Just him coming out on his own and working with [vice president of medical services/head athletic trainer Jeff Ferguson] Ferg and [head strength and conditioning coach] Ray [Wright] and then right when phase one started he was ahead of schedule and I think that's why he's getting the results right now that a lot of people normally don't get six months or whatever it is after his Achilles."

Where is Reuben right now? Do you have him at WILL?

"He hasn't been out there yet. I think he's been focusing more on WILL. But, at that position, you've got to know both of them."

What has G Joshua Garnett shown you and are you trying to figure out where he fits best in terms of right or left?

"We know he's going to play guard for us. We're trying to see what he's better at, left guard or right guard, based on our five that are going to end up being out there. Whoever that other person is, what's the best way to put those inside three people. So, you need some versatility. I know he played at right guard last year. I know he played at left guard throughout college. We worked him at both yesterday. A little bit more right

guard than left. Today, I want to say we worked him at both. I think it was definitely more left guard today than right guard. But, it's something we want him to workout at both and hopefully we'll put him in a spot that's the best for him and hopefully it will be the best for the team."

Can you talk a little bit about WR Trent Taylor? Seeing him out on the field today for the first time, it looked like he did a really nice job of finding the soft spots in zone coverage. What stands out about his game so far in camp?

"Trent's a guy who is very good at separating. He's very quick. He's a very tough player. His feet are usually under him. So, he always can make a couple moves in a short area which is a quality that a lot of people look for in a slot receiver. And he also has the toughness and awareness to, as you said, sit down in zones and know when he doesn't have to do all these moves because no one's looking at him, they're looking at the quarterback and then when he catches the ball, he's not scared. He gets up the field. He fights for yards. He's got those qualities you look for in the type of player who keeps you on the field, which is usually third down."

You had the two minicamps, but this has been your first chance to kind of have everybody together. For you, as a first time head coach, are there still adjustments that you have to make in terms of running practice or reminding yourself to look at the defense or anything like that?

"Yes. It's been awkward for me sometimes where to go. I'm used to knowing exactly where to go and what to do and I always did that from an offensive coordinator standpoint which I still do a lot of those responsibilities. So, at times, I feel most comfortable when I go to do that because that's something to do. But, when I pass it over to some other guys and let them do it, I find myself walking around a lot and I'm not used to that. It feels awkward, but I don't think it's a bad thing. I think I should walk around and watch everyone and see it. I always see it on the tape, but that's later at night. You want players to know you're there and paying attention to everything and I usually try to cover that in meetings the next day also."

Do you hope that as you go along and you find a rhythm, I'll be here in this period, that type of thing?

"Definitely. I think the main thing is I'll never just do one of all. I hope the rest of my career I'm doing a little bit of everything and wherever you think you're needed the most, you work in that area and you focus on that and have confidence in everyone else to take care of the rest of the stuff. But, you can't be everywhere. So, you like to feel you can be where you're needed the most."

Small sample size, but anybody jump up and surprise you that did anything?

"I think it's too early. So, I wouldn't want to say. Everyone was good. Everyone was so eager, which they usually are the first day. Today, they came out just as eager. A few more mistakes today, but I'm excited to have a day off tomorrow as far as not going on the field. It's still a phase two type day, but we're not going to work them physically. We're going to have them do a bunch of stretching and stuff with Ray. Then, we're going to get a couple of hours with them just to watch tape. So, we'll get to put two days

together of tape. We'll be able to sit there and really coach it a lot which yesterday and today were just, with the hours we have, we're more installing it, trying to get out there to run it. Tomorrow, we're really focusing in on what we've done the last two days. We won't leave the film room. We'll just sit there and watch it and usually that leads to a better Thursday."

What have you seen from LB Aaron Lynch? He's a guy that came into the league with a lot of potential, a lot of promise. Do you see him doing the steps necessary to become a better player?

"Yeah. There's no doubt Aaron's going in the right direction for us. He came in in the offseason, we challenged him hard with just the way we worked and stuff. He hasn't shied away from any of it. He's jumped in on all of our stuff. I believe he only missed one day of the offseason workouts. He had an issue with his wife, which he had to take care of. So, he's gotten better each day. He's gotten more in shape each day and I'm seeing it on the field each day. And it's not just him. I'm seeing it with a lot of our guys. Ray has pushed these guys extremely hard in the conditioning part and the guys haven't faded away at all. They've stepped up to the challenge. You never know when some guys are working a certain way they're not used to and it's voluntary, you never know exactly who's going to show up the next week. Our guys have continued to do it and he's definitely been one of them."

Switching schemes defensively, there's some carryover from the outside linebackers to SAM and LEO, from the outside 3-4 guys. How have guys like LB Ahmad Brooks and Aaron, how steep is that learning curve for them learning a new system and new responsibilities?

"I think it is for everybody, especially if you haven't done something a lot during your whole career. I think there's a lot of similarities to it and where the two are going to play and stuff and where you guys will see them, but I think techniques are totally different. How you want to take on blocks, how you want to play the run. Ahmad, I think, has been around a little longer than Aaron. So, he's probably had a little bit more crossover, some similar schemes. I know we call it a 4-3, but it looks like a 3-4 to me, which a lot of 3-4 teams look like a four-down teams. It all depends how you look at it and what your personnel is. 3-4 is really over versus base offense anyways which on average in an NFL game, that's 20-percent of the plays. So, almost the whole league to me runs a four-down look and that's what you do when there's base personnel on the field. We play a 3-4 structure. It's just how do you play those guys, two-gap or one-gap? So, most of our stuff's one-gap because we've got an eight-man front playing cover-three and those guys have got to be more into their gaps and things like that, which is different."

With Ahmad, just given the point that he's at in his career, what stands out to you about his approach and the fact he's transitioning and he still finds himself getting first team reps?

"Yeah. He's getting them because he deserves them. Watching how he played last year and then going into this offseason, you never know when a guy who has been around a bunch, if they're going to feel that they need the offseason like other people do and Ahmad's been here every day and he's needed it just like everyone has anytime you're

learning a new scheme. But, anytime you have a veteran like that, you worry that, hey, maybe they won't think that they do need it. But, Ahmad has and he's been here. He's worked at everything. He's in good shape. He's done what we've asked in the weight room with Ray and he's done everything with the position coaches and coordinator on defense. So, I think he's learning it and he should because he's putting the work in."

How have you seen the attitude shift from the first day you met this team to today?

"I think you get to learn personalities more. Everyone, the first day is and myself included, we're all just, we don't know each other and you're just trying to tell them what the standard is and how things are going to be and they're all sitting there wanting to know the standard and they're wanting to do things the right way. Then, each day you kind of get to know what that standard is, how it's going to be and once you get that down, you start to learn how each other are just as a person. I think that's a process we're still going it through, but I think it's gone great. I think we're getting closer each day. It does take time, but I'm really happy with the tightness of our team in the little amount of time we've been together."

You mentioned that Bowman, you can't tell that he ever had the injury. How do you sort of balance him not doing too much at this stage too when he's competing for a job and wanting to go out there after all these months?

"Definitely, and we definitely have to balance that and especially with a competitive guy who's trying to win a job. He's probably not going to tell us. So, that's something that we definitely evaluate. We always chart their reps. We have all the technology that I don't totally understand that gives me answers that other people understand that tells us when they've had too much. But, you've got to know that stuff as a coach. Guys like Bo, guys like [T Joe] Staley and guys like [OL Jeremy] Zuttah. People who have been around and they're at that 30 mark, you know, especially when they work the way those guys do, we've got to protect them from themselves at times and we'll look at that as OTAs go. That usually comes a bigger play in training camp. But, it's something we're thinking about every day."

Who do you tend to pass the offensive coordinator duties to when you're walking around, watching the defense?

"I mix it up. Different guys have different attributes. [Run game specialist] Mike McDaniel, our run game specialist, and [wide receivers/pass game specialist] Mike LaFleur, who is our receiver coach and our pass game specialist, those guys have been with me the longest and know the offense the best. The other guys I've been with but not as long as those guys. So, we balance it up. [Assistant head coach/tight ends coach] Jon Embree's the assistant head coach and I get him to talk to the guys a lot. [Running backs coach] Bobby Turner's been an assistant head coach for our teams we've had in the past and anytime that I need him to take over, he does. So, it depends what period it is, depends what we're talking about."

When you enter the locker room now, there's some great players from the past on that wall. Was that your idea or how did that come to be?

“It’s pretty cool to work for the 49ers and have that history. So, one thing I’ve learned over the years is, don’t assume that everyone knows that. I’ve asked like four running backs in a row over the last four years who [former NFL RB] Marcus Allen is and I’m like one for four on them. So, it like blows my mind. So, you can’t assume everything. I used to think I was young and then you find out a 22-year-old doesn’t know someone like that, you’re like, ‘Oh my gosh, I must be very old.’ So, you want that stuff up. You want people to know about it because it is a neat thing and to know what’s been done here before and I think it makes you that much hungrier to try and do that again.”

Who put it up?

“[Equipment manager] Jay Brunetti is in charge of our whole locker room. So, I go through him with everything. But, I know he didn’t paint it. He has his people, I have my people, but we got it done.”