

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

TRANSCRIPTIONS



**Head Coach Kyle Shanahan
Press Conference – September 6, 2017
San Francisco 49ers**

Do you have a sense yet where DB Jimmie Ward is as far as his availability for this game?

“No, he’s limited. That’s what he’ll be today. We’ll see what he is the next day. Once he can string together a few good days in a row is when we’ll feel better about putting him in the game.”

Will he participate in team drills today?

“He’s limited, so we’ll see.”

Do you know who would fill that role, whether it’s S Jaquiski Tartt versus DB Lorenzo Jerome?

“Both those guys will be competing. They’ve got three days to do it. Depends how we use them, what packages. I’ll probably have a better answer for you on Sunday.”

In what ways can Carolina Panthers RB Christian McCaffrey kind of diversify what Carolina does offensively? I know you’ve seen them for a number of years now.

“He can do everything. So it’s just how do you treat him? He’s a good running back. He can run outside. He can run inside. He’s good at screens. He’s good at routes out of the backfield. You can motion him out wide and use him as a wide receiver. He’s developed in those routes too. He causes a lot of issues in some man-to-man situations. You just don’t know what you’re going to get. When a guy can be everywhere and he’s versatile it limits what a defense can do, some of the situations that he can put you in.”

Is that an element that they’ve maybe been missing in your opinion in the last few years?

“Trying to think, yeah I don’t think they’ve ever had one quite like that. It’s a good element for anyone to have. They’re hard to come by. You want one every year in any offense that you’re in. But, anytime you have a real good running back who can also be a threat in the pass game, that gives you a lot of options.”

Christian was saying that your families are close, the Shanahan’s and McCaffrey’s. He said that he thought maybe you babysat him a few times as a kid. Do you remember that?

“If I did, I probably left my sister to do it very quickly and moved on. His dad was my hero growing up. I was close with [former NFL WR] Ed [McCaffrey] and his wife Lisa.

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That's really why I wore 87 in college. Ed was the man. I knew all his sons. They were a lot younger when I knew them, but they've all turned out to be pretty good athletes and real good people."

You faced Carolina's defense four times the past few seasons. Do you feel you have a good sense of what they like to do in terms of coverages and blitzes?

"Yes, and I think I played them three years ago in Cleveland, I think I played them the year before that in Washington. So, I feel like I've played them about every year for a while. Four times in the last two years in Atlanta. They're a challenge. They've been a good defense for a long time. They've got a lot of really good players and they've got a really good, sound scheme. It's extremely aggressive, but it's also, they can limit explosives too. They're sound in their coverages and they are very tough against the run. Not to mention they led the league in sacks, I know they did last year. I'm sure they were up there the year before because they've been good at that for a long time."

What do they do to limit explosives?

"They're just sound in their coverage. They don't put too much pressure on the corners. And when you have very smart linebackers who are good in zone, tied with a pass rush and guys who really tee off on the quarterback, you can't wait very long to expose them. If you do wait and hold onto that ball, it's probably going to be a turnover or a sack. It's tough for big plays to show up fast."

Do you expect a pretty similar scheme with the changing coordinators or--?

"Yeah, I do. They've been successful. I know he's been there for a while. Everyone has their own tweaks and you'll see what happens in Week 1. People will probably start studying that to see what the differences are. But, usually with the success they've had and how good and sound of a scheme it's been, I don't expect there to be too much differences, but I know there'll be some wrinkles."

What have you been able to do with OL Laken Tomlinson since he's been here and can you tell without getting on the field yet how he's picking up the scheme?

"Well, he's a very intelligent guy. He's very smart. We got him in here over the weekend so we were able to meet with him, I think we did on Sunday. And he got to practice a little bit on Monday. It was good to get him out there just going. We didn't do much on Monday. Today it'll be a lot more for him. He's obviously behind. He hasn't played in a system like this in college or in the NFL, but he's got the tools to be successful and we're excited to get to work with him. I know he's got a lot of work ahead of him. I don't want to overwhelm him too much, but we're going to be challenging him every day."

Did you put him in one spot and just say, 'Learn this?'

"The guard spots, but he's got to do both. You just don't have enough guys to get through practices between the scout-team looks and the offensive line. So, it's just really not an option just to stay at one spot."

Is TE George Kittle your starting tight end or do you plan on using a rotation based on down-and-distance?

“Yeah, that will be on situations, down-and-distance, how healthy he is. He’s another guy who will be limited today. We’ve got three guys on our roster, so we’ll see how that plays out throughout the week. We won’t really know that until Sunday.”

Is that an aggravation of the hamstring?

“Yes.”

Going back to Tomlinson, any chance that he’s in the mix to start or--?

“There’s definitely a chance. I’ve seen it done before, but it’s definitely a hard thing to do. There’s really three real practices to get that done and that Friday practice, it’s one practice in pads too. He doesn’t have any familiarity with the scheme, so it’s going to be a challenge for him. I don’t want to put unrealistic expectations on him, but I know he’s going for it. I know we’re working with him that way to get him ready. Hopefully he is by Sunday. If not, hopefully he is by the next Sunday. If not, we’ll be trying every single week.”

DL Solomon Thomas kind of looked like he was starting on nickel. Is he going to also start on base as well? How do you see him?

“It depends on what personnel they’re in, how we think they’re playing it, what the packages are. I’m not going to get into any exactly who’s starting, especially like I said with the safeties, I’ve said it with the tight ends. I’m pretty much going to say it with every position. [QB] Brian Hoyer’s starting, I promise you guys that. [T Joe] Staley’s starting. That’s about, everyone else, we’ll find out on Sunday. It’s the season now, if there’s any gray area we’ll figure it out on Sunday.”

I know you’re familiar with Christian McCaffrey, but it’s hard to know how Carolina plans to use him. So, how do you game plan for that in particular?

“I think you have an idea. We all know what he’s good at. They’re going to try to put him in situations where he can be man-to-man coverage. They’re going to give him the ball as a running back. Everyone knows the type of options you can have with the zone read and the packages of a wildcat. So, you don’t know exactly. They can’t do it all. There’s only so many plays in a game, but you have to at least go through it all and be prepared for whatever. As tape goes, I think people will get a better idea throughout the year. Especially in Week 1, you’ve just got to be sound in what you do and you’ve got to be ready for everything.”

You’re about to go up against a pretty big wide receiver in Carolina Panthers WR Kelvin Benjamin, 6-5, 245. From an offensive standpoint, what does he provide that maybe separates himself from some of these other wide receivers around the league?

“I think any time, being big’s an advantage if you can get open and if you have very good hands and Kelvin does have that. He’s been a solid receiver. I studied him hard coming out of Florida State. When you have a big guy who has that size who can also come off the ball and get in and out of breaks, he’s going to get some separation. But, when you’re big like that you don’t need a ton of separation. Even sometimes when he’s covered, as long as he’s between the man and the ball, it’s very hard to stop him. When

you have elite-type of hands and you have that size and you don't feel people hanging on your forearms. Guarding him doesn't mean your job is done. It's hard to get the incompleteness. He also has the ability to separate too. That's what makes him a threat to be a very good wideout in this league."

They drafted Christian and Carolina Panthers WR Curtis Samuel and Carolina Panthers head coach Ron Rivera even said in the con-call just now they're looking at ways to maybe take the load off Carolina Panthers QB Cam Newton and presumably that means taking less hits, maybe fewer run plays. Is that something you're anticipating and do you still have to be aware of Cam as a runner?

"Yes, definitely. That's what Cam does best and that's what makes him very tough to defend. I hear all that too, but it really doesn't matter until you see what happens. They do have more weapons. There's definitely different ways they can use all those guys, especially when you have guys like the two you mentioned. Are they running backs? Are they receivers? Well, depends on what the play is, so you've got to be able to account for all that and then you have a quarterback who can play like a running back and a quarterback. It definitely gives them a lot of versatility as far as the type of scheme that they can be in. That's why you've got to be ready for everything, but you've also got to know you're not going to be. There's too many options they can do with those type of players. So, you better make sure you're sound in what you do."

In that same vein, you have the benefit of being with an entire new personnel Week 1. There's no regular season tape. Is that to your advantage at this point? Are there, obviously you talked about not showing everything in the preseason, but do you view that as a significant advantage heading into this game?

"Yeah, I think it's always hard for everybody earlier in the year. You want to study a bunch of tape, but you study last years and you don't know what's changed. You study preseason, but you don't know what they're setting you up for. There's guys who aren't on the team anymore. So, regardless of being on a new team or an old team, that's stuff that's tough for guys every single year. Even if they've done the scheme forever, there's always going to be new wrinkles. Usually stuff that they really like, they don't show much in preseason. You go into that every year thinking like that. Yeah, I do think it helps you when you are on a new staff and they aren't quite sure, but I have been an offensive coordinator for a while, so there's definitely lots of tape that they can look at, so it's not like they have no idea."

You had that one season in Cleveland with Brian. How has he grown as a quarterback?

"I just think he's been through more. He's more battle-tested. His ability is the same. I just think Brian's in a good place. He's had his ups and downs. I think he's got to the point where he realizes he can't control everything and he just works as hard as he can and doesn't get too high or too low. I think he believes in himself and I think it's real because he's developed a confidence through adversity through overcoming it. I just see a more confident guy who is up for anything."

Is he a captain? Did you guys vote on that?

“No. We didn’t vote on captains. I don’t plan on doing that until later in the year. I’m just going to decide on each captain each week. Later in the year, I plan on having some set ones that finish the year for us.”

In Carolina Panthers LB Luke Kuechly and LB Thomas Davis, is that the best inside linebacker duo you’re going to face this year?

“It’s hard to imagine it being much better, especially with [Carolina Panthers LB] Shaq [Thompson] there also. They make you go, those three and [Carolina Panthers DT] Kawann Short inside. That’s as talented as it gets. And it’s not just talent, they are very smart. They play in a scheme, they’ve done it for a while, they know what you do, they tee off on plays, they can recognize plays very fast, they haven’t done a ton over the year, which makes them so sound and makes them extremely fast and they get turnovers and they’re tough to move the ball on. So, starts with those linebackers and the people up front. That’s why they’ve always had a lot of success.”