

CEO Jed York
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San Francisco 49ers
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Opening comments:

“Good morning. It’s a pleasure to be able to address the fans directly today. I’d like to thank everybody for tuning in, but more importantly before we begin, I want to make sure that I thank the fans for their support, especially during a difficult season like this. I’d also like to thank the media for being here today in person. I know that it wasn’t easy to get everybody together and all the traffic around the stadium with the Super Bowl preparations, so I appreciate you being here today. This season was frustrating on a number of levels. We took a step back from our ultimate goal of winning a Super Bowl. For that, I want to apologize to our fans and for everybody that cares deeply about this team the way I do. I hear the criticism, loudly. Whether that’s talking to fans directly, whether that’s social media or from planes flying over my head. The results of this season rest on my shoulders squarely. It wasn’t good enough. I want you to understand that we’re going to do everything that we can and we’re working hard right now to put the pieces in place to get this team back to where it belongs. I think everybody is aware that we released Jim Tomsula last night. Jimmy T has been a part of this organization for a long time. I’ve watched him develop undrafted free agents into bona-fide pros. I’ve watched him get the most out of first round talent. He kept this team together and this locker room together this season under very difficult circumstances. For all of that, I thank him and I appreciate his efforts. Unfortunately, I didn’t see this team improve collectively from the beginning of the season to the end. That’s what ultimately led to this decision. I wish Jimmy and Julie and their three kids all the best moving forward and wherever Jimmy ends up next season, they should know that they are getting a heck-of-a person and a heck-of-a football coach. [49ers general manager] Trent Baalke will remain the general manager of the 49ers. Trent understands that I’m not satisfied with the current state of this team. Trent’s role is to find the next head coach and continue to build this roster and get us back to championship form. Trent has the skills to do this and get this done. He’s built championship rosters in the past. He’s got the respect of folks around the league and his peers. And, Trent knows that he and his staff are going to have all the resources available, at their disposal, to make sure that we get this job right. I’ve said it before and I think it bears repeating today, I understand my role as owner of the San Francisco 49ers. I need to make sure that I find the best football people and give them all the resources that they need to win championships. A championship caliber mentality was engrained in me from a very early age. Whether that was my grandfather and his success in business, whether that was my uncle and everything that he accomplished here with the San Francisco 49ers or my mother and what she accomplished at the Pittsburgh Penguins. I believe in winning championships. I realize that my expectations seem unachievable. I harken back to my grandfather, spending a lot of time with him, and he loved [former NFL head coach] Vince Lombardi. And I don’t know that I’ll get the quote right, but Vince always talked about, ‘We can’t obtain perfection, but if we strive for perfection, we can catch excellence.’ I believe in that. I believe in chasing perfection. From a personal experience, I learned a lot from 2015. A season like this ages you. I think I lost a little bit more hair. Beyond that, I was able to recognize mistakes that I’ve made in the past. Even looking over the last few seasons, I think it’s important to learn and to grow from your mistakes. I think I understand what the fans want. They want a team that they can be proud of on Sundays. They want a championship team. I want that too and I’m fighting for that. You can trust me that we are going to do everything that we can to get this team back where it belongs. And before we turn to 2016, I realize that 2015 wasn’t fun. It wasn’t easy. I don’t take the fan’s support lightly. I understand how much passion that you have for this team and even if it’s in the form of criticism of me, I respect it and you deserve more and you’re going to get more. I want

this team to win. Nobody wants this team to win more than I do and I'm going to work at it every day to make sure that we get back to where we belong. I'm happy to take any questions that the media has."

You said that the results of this season rest squarely on your shoulders.

"They do."

Let's be specific. As you look back, was it a mistake to part with former 49ers and current University of Michigan head football coach Jim Harbaugh and in addition was it a mistake to hire Jim Tomsula as his successor?

"Jim Harbaugh is a good football coach. His success at Michigan doesn't surprise me at all. We need to make sure that we look forward to the next head coach. In terms of Jimmy T, we took a chance on somebody that we believe strongly in, certainly his character, his leadership ability, what he was able to do. And ultimately that didn't work out. And I feel like watching what my uncle did, watching what my grandfather did, you have to learn from mistakes. You have to learn from failure. And we didn't get this one right and we need to make sure that we get the next one right and we need to make sure that we learn from this season."

If you didn't get this one right and Trent is going to hire the next coach, what makes you think that the next one will be right? I assume that you're not going to be bringing anyone else in the decision making process?

"I mean, Trent's staff will be in part of it. But, it will be Trent leading the process."

Wait, can you answer that though, follow-up? Why are you confident that he'll make the right decision this time?

"I mean, I think he's done it in the past and I think he can do it again."

The Cleveland Browns have hired a search firm to help them with the coach. Have you considered doing that given the situation or not?

"I talked to my uncle this morning for a while. He texted me around 5:15. I called him around 5:20 when I got up and I don't think there's anybody better to help me as a mentor, as somebody that's been there, as somebody that's done it than my uncle. We talked for a long time this morning. And I know that if I need direction, if I need guidance, if I need somebody to help, I've got a person I think is the best owner in the history of sports that's on my team, that's on my side, that I can turn to anytime."

What mistakes did you learn from during the past year?

"I'd say the biggest thing, I think I've taken things too personally. Interactions with the media, some of the criticism from fans, I think I've internalized that too much and I've taken it too personally. I think I've done things and we can get into tweets that I've sent and thank god you can't see tweets that I didn't send. Those things aren't helpful for the team. As much as I'd like to share how I feel about the team, it's not helpful for our club for me to talk about how I feel when we win, how I feel when we lose. It's ultimately a distraction. It's hard enough to win football games in the National Football League. It's harder when you have somebody that tweets something that's a distraction to the club and I can't do that. I think you've seen me take a step back from twitter and from other social media and I think it's important for our team and that it's important for our fans to have a good clear communication with the club. But, I'm emotional. I learned that from my uncle. Both of us put holes in walls. Both of us have screamed and yelled and said things that we wish we could take back. Some behind the scenes, sometimes in front of the public and I can't be a distraction to this team. The world is so much

different today than I think when my uncle ran the team. It's not a one-day news cycle. It's a 24-hour, literally a second-by-second news cycle and I can't add to that."

Do you have a short list of who you want as coach moving forward? Is there a short list?

"We have a clear understanding of what we want. We want a leader. We want somebody that has a clear strategic vision. We definitely have a short list. This is going to be a very, very competitive offseason, so I hope you understand I'm not going to get into the details of that list. But, we have a clear understanding of what we're looking for."

Is an offensive mind a part of that priority?

"Again, I don't want to tip our hand in terms of where we're going. It's going to be a very competitive offseason. You can certainly speculate however you would like on that, but I don't want to get into specifics in terms of what we're looking for."

Do you think that the roster was the biggest issue on this team, maybe not coaching, that this is not a very good roster? So, the guy who has put this roster together is remaining in charge of it? I guess probably a lot of fans want to know why that is?

"I've seen Trent build a championship-caliber roster. As his time as director of player personnel, as his time as general manager, I believe in Trent's ability. We have a lot of opportunity in front of us. I don't know exactly where we stack in cap room, but I think we're top-five in the league in cap room today. We've got the most draft picks. I'm fairly certain that it's set that we are picking seventh. I don't know, you guys give me nod that is correct. So, we are picking seventh for sure. I've watched Trent build this roster and I have confidence that he can get it done. There are very few general managers that have built championship-caliber rosters and I think it's important that we have somebody with that experience and having a good staff around him, like [senior personnel executive] Tommy Gamble, like guys like that that have been there and done it that we can continue to build this thing because this is going to be a very important offseason for us. Again, we haven't been the most active in free agency in years past. We need to figure out what the right talent is outside of this building, what the right talent is inside of this building and make sure that we knock it out of the park this year in the draft."

You said Trent has a very clear understanding that the roster is not, the team is not where it needs to be. Does that mean Trent is on the clock as it were or on a job-security watch?

"Trent's our general manager. We need to make sure that we go together and find the next head coach. We then make sure that that fit is there and works together and they're going to be working together to build this team back to championship caliber."

The previous four years you had a very successful head coach. Looking back on it, do you regret not making a bigger effort to keep Jim here as your head coach?

"I think it's well understood what effort that we made to keep him here. I'm not going to dive into that. I'm not going to get into things that happened behind the scenes and I can't look backwards. We can't win games that we've already played. We can't undo decisions that have been made. We need to make sure that all of our effort is focused on the next head coach of the team."

Do you have a time in mind as to when you would like a coach in place?

"There's not a specific timeframe. We want to make sure that we identify our candidates and go after them and when the time's right, we'll make an announcement."

Trent has complete, 100-percent control over the roster. Now, if a new head coach comes in and wants that, will that be something Trent has to work out with that?

“I think it’s got to be something that those two work together on. It’s very clear you can’t have one person have 100-percent say and not have input from the other. You need to make sure that there’s a great relationship between your head coach and your general manager and they need to sit down and figure out how do we evaluate the roster together and how do we make sure that we continue to improve this team.”

Your last two coaching hires were very different personality-wise. Jim Harbaugh, huge fish that had a big resume of winning as a head coach. The next hire was a name who had never been a coordinator much less an NFL Europe head coach. Two disparate personalities. Two disparate results. Can you tell us, is there a description for the next head coach? Is it a big fish with an NFL head coaching experience resume?

“Again, this is going to be a very competitive offseason. I’m not going to get into specifics on where we are and what we’re looking for. You can certainly speculate all you would like, but I’m not going to get into that right now. Again, we want somebody that has leadership ability and a clear vision of what the San Francisco 49ers are and a clear vision on how to get us back to a championship caliber.”

With an experienced resume?

“Again, I think we’re not going to get into the specifics of what we’re looking for. There’s a lot of teams that are looking for a coach. I don’t want to tip our hand and give away any information that I think shouldn’t be divulged right now.”

You’ve spoken about holding yourself accountable. What was the timing for today and not speaking up to this point? Was it just get through this season and--?

“No. I think more than anything, with not speaking, I don’t want to be a distraction. I think our head coach needs to be the face of this team on a normal basis in terms of dealing with the media. I try to interact with fans as much as I can on social media. I’m going to continue to do that, but I want to do that in a way that doesn’t distract from the team. So, as much as I’m sure you love hearing from me and having me up here, that’s not my role and it’s not my role to sit and tweet all of my feelings and things like that because you just can’t share everything completely and I think if you can’t share everything completely, which I’m just not able to do in my position, I don’t think it’s the best thing for our team. I think you have to be very careful about how you communicate with fans and make sure that everything that I’m doing is letting our football people build this team and letting our fans be proud of what team is on the field.”

Where is this organization right now compared to where you were a year ago at this time?

“Again, I’m not a football expert. So, I’m not going to get into evaluating the roster. I think we have some good young talent. I think we have some pieces that are there. But, we need to continue to grow. We need to continue to improve and I’m glad that we have a lot of ammunition this offseason to be able to continue to build it.”

Are you further away from where you wanted to be?

“8-8 and 5-11, neither one of them is acceptable to me. I’d rather take a swing like we did on Jimmy T and if you miss, the nice thing about the NFL is they reward you for missing. We have a high draft pick and that’s the thing that I don’t want to be drafting high, but if we don’t compete for championships, I’d much rather be drafting high and be able to add the top-tier talent in the draft to this roster. So, that’s where we are today. It’s not good enough. Trent understands it’s

not good enough and we need to continue to add talent to this roster and make sure that we can compete for championships.”

Will the new head coach be able to pick his entire staff?

“Yes, and that’s always been the case here.”

Your tone obviously is far different than it was a year ago. Is it fair to say you’ve been humbled by this season?

“Yeah, absolutely. And I don’t think it’s just this season. I think it’s a collective approach and looking back on being in this role. The world is different than when my uncle was in this role. We were about the same age when we started running the team and I think you need to adapt as the world adapts. I think I’ve learned a lot. This season wasn’t fun. It wasn’t fun for me, it certainly wasn’t fun for the fans and I truly am sorry that we had to go through this year. But, you have my word that I’m going to do everything that we can to get this team back.”

Can you talk about why president Paraag Marathe was reassigned and what his role will be in the organization moving forward?

“Yeah. So, we had talked to our staff well before the season started and I think our staff saw that [COO] Al [Guido] was taking on more of a role in terms of business ops. As my family looks at other things that we’re doing, Paraag has been somebody that’s been an advisor to me and somebody that’s worked with me for a long time. So, Paraag and I will be doing things that are outside of the 49ers. His role in terms of football will not change. He’s going to negotiate salaries and negotiate contracts and he’ll be in charge of the salary cap and he’ll be working within the organization the same as he always has.”

A follow up on that. There’s been steady rumors that you are interested in selling the team, that your family is interested in selling the team. Have you? Are you in the process of? Will you sell the 49ers?

“My family’s owned this team since before I was born and they’ll own this team after I’m gone.”

You follow social media. Did you happen to see what Jim Harbaugh tweeted out yesterday?

“Yeah. I’m definitely aware of it, but I can’t focus myself on things that are outside of our head coaching search right now.”

What do you think is the future for QB Colin Kaepernick? What’s your feeling on that?

“I love Colin. He’s been a great piece of this team for a long time. He has certainly helped us get to the level of success that we’ve had. I’m not going to make any decisions on players. A new head coach is going to come in here. He’s going to evaluate the roster. Right now, I want to make sure that Colin gets back healthy. We have a few guys that have been hurt. I want to make sure that he continues to improve. It was great seeing him and seeing a lot of other guys yesterday. The roster will be left up to the head coach and the general manager.”

What did your uncle tell you this morning?

“I’ll leave profanities out. Ultimately, it’s continue to work and get this team where you want it to be. Even if you have a bad season, don’t settle. There’s a lot of things that you can do to tweak a roster to go from 5-11 to 9-7. But, you’re never going to break through that barrier. I think that’s always been the message of my family. Don’t be afraid to make mistakes. Don’t be afraid to fail. Continue to push for what you want to push for for your ultimate goal. I think those are the messages that he’s consistently sent.”

I'm just curious if you feel that because of what's happened, both before you hired Harbaugh and since the way that relationship devolved, all the others things, that this might be a tough sell for an experienced, high-powered coach, qualified coach, that they might not be interested in coming to work here?

"I'm not concerned about that."

You said you have a short list. Is that something that you want to act quickly on because you said it's going to be competitive and is it something, are you going to share with the public who you're bringing in because other teams will announce who they're bringing in for interviews?

"I think information, whether it's coming from agents or from people, we will try to keep this as close to the vest as possible. I don't want to tip our hand to everyone else that's looking for a head coach. I think we want to make sure that we have a clear communication with our fans, but I don't want to do anything that's going to potentially put us at a disadvantage for hiring the next head coach."

Last year at this time there was concerns about leaks all over the building and Sunday morning Pro Football Talk had it at five in the morning that Jim Tomsula would be fired. Are we back to square one where you're concerned about leaks in the building?

"Having things come out of the building and having the leaks like that that are harmful to the team, harmful to Jimmy T, somebody that's been here for a long time, harmful to our players, harmful to our fans, that's not in my best interest. That didn't come from this organization. You're going to have lots of speculation around this time of the year. And you guys are well aware that there's speculation and people that you think are going to get fired or not thinking are going to get fired. We have no interest in leaking information out of this building. If I find people that are leaking information, they are not going to be a part of this team."

The second one is, you said in your opening statement that you hear the criticism loudly. So, we might as well air it out that the harshest criticism is that you guys built this stadium on the backs of Jim Harbaugh's wins, sold the corporate suites, jacked up the value of the franchise, tripled it and now don't really care that much about anything else other than the money. And the evidence would be that you paid Jim Tomsula one of the lowest salaries in the league and you left a lot of money under the cap. So, how would you address that criticism that fans consistently bring to us in the media?

"I would say this; we've got several years of Jimmy T's salary left and we're going to eat it. Whether he's coaching somewhere else or not, we owe him that. That's not a concern. I could have easily come out here and said, 'Hey we had a lot of injuries this year. A lot of things didn't go our way. We're going to stick with this.' That's not where we are. We're willing to spend what it takes to get everything right to get back to a championship culture. In terms of salary cap, just because you have room doesn't mean that you have to spend the room. You can transfer that room over to this year. We've got a lot of salary cap room. So, you can't just spend money to spend money. You want to make sure that you're spending money wisely. So, we will always continue to manage the cap. Trent and his staff know that if they need to spend the entire room, they can do it. If they need to roll it over, they can do it and we will do what it takes to get back to a championship level."

This is not a 49ers question, but it's an important Bay Area football question. You've got an owners meeting coming up next week at which the future of the LA market is going to be debated and the Raiders are involved in that. What is the 49ers and your stance on that? How will you vote in that and what do you feel about the Raiders future, perhaps involving this stadium even?

"I don't want to speak for [Oakland Raiders owner] Mark Davis or for anybody else and I'll leave their future and what they're looking at to them. I'm not going to speculate on that. Obviously LA is front of mind for the National Football League right now. I'm on the stadium committee, so I will certainly be in committee meetings this week. I have to make sure that all the information that's out there we figure out is there a reason for teams to relocate and if so what are the best teams and the best projects to move to Los Angeles. And there is a lot of information to get through. I certainly haven't made up my mind yet. I don't want to speculate on to where I think it's going to go, but I think it's important first and foremost that we were in an old stadium. Just going from my point of view, we did everything that we could to stay first in San Francisco and if that wasn't possible absolutely in the Bay Area. I think it's vitally important that the National Football League, that we do everything that we can to stay in markets that we're in. And if it's proven that we can't stay there and the markets aren't viable or if there's a reason to leave, we need to make sure that if we go back into a market such as Los Angeles, the second largest market in the country, we do it the right way and we do it where it's not going to be like it was before where you had two teams there that ended up leaving in, I can't remember the year but I think it was the early to mid-90s. You need to make sure that if you're going to go back you're there to stay. This is not going to be an easy decision."

Do you think a team should be playing in LA next year? Would you be in favor of that?

"In general, I'm in favor of teams being in markets that work. And, if you can prove that Los Angeles works and that the existing markets are tough and they're not workable for long-term stadium deals, then I think you have to do what's best for the overall league. But, you have to exhaust every effort possible to make sure that teams are staying in their own markets."

There are some big names that have reached out on the market for coaches. Did anyone reach out to you, like former NFL head coaches Mike Holmgren or Chip Kelly? Their names have been floating around for days now.

"Again, you guys have been here before. There's going to be a lot of rumors until all the coaching vacancies are filled. I'm not going to get into who has reached out and what those conversations have been. I want to make sure that everything that we do is focused on working our list and making sure that we do everything that we can to get the next head coach in here."

Do you wish you hired Chicago Bears offensive coordinator Adam Gase last year?

"I'm not looking back at anything. You can't undo those decisions. I'm looking forward."

And has the entire coaching staff, have they all been released?

"So, only Jimmy has been released. The new head coach will be evaluating the staff and it will be up to him to decide if he wants to keep folks. And if not, as we've told our guys, if you have something, we'll certainly listen to it. But, it's hard to put a staff together. I think we have some good coaches on this staff and I want to make sure that our head coach has every opportunity to evaluate the guys that are here and make sure that he has all of the resources and everything that he needs to hire whoever else he wants to bring in."

Another big picture question. We only get these like once a year, so we've got ask the big, big ones, the macros. The perception was that Jim Harbaugh was extremely difficult to get along with and that was a large reason why you guys parted ways, that you personally did not like him or get along with him, that Jim Tomsula was the easiest guy in the world to get along with and that's why you hired him. Can you address that issue? Every owner, every team has the personality of its owner. Are you in need of somebody who you're comfortable with, who makes you feel good when you're in a room with them?

“We’re in need of somebody that can win Super Bowls.”

So, personality doesn’t matter?

“We’re in need of somebody that can win Super Bowls.”

Didn’t you have that guy?

“We haven’t won a Super Bowl since 1994.”