

TRANSCRIPTIONS



**Defensive Coordinator Robert Saleh
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San Francisco 49ers**

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In the regular season game against the Packers, CB Richard Sherman did a nice job covering Green Bay Packers WR Davante Adams, but Sherman is kept on just one side of the field. Is there any plans that he will follow Davante Adams whether Adams goes from left to right or anything like that or Sherman will be kept on the same side of the field as always?

“Not to get too much into schematics, but we have a philosophy on how we operate around here, and that doesn't mean we don't look at every possible avenue, but I'll stay away from that one. I'm sorry.”

What makes Adams so tough to defend and how do you feel you defended him the first time?

“He's very strong. He's a very good route runner. He's got great hands. He's got a salty to him where he's really good in double moves. He just kind of lulls you to sleep. But, he's savvy, and him and [Green Bay Packers QB] Aaron [Rodgers] have a really good relationship. They've got a good rapport with one another, so they're very comfortable. They know where each other is going to be. Just the whole combination of the routes they have for him and all the different things they ask him to do, it's a good match, and he's very talented.”

When you look at CB Ahkello Witherspoon and CB Emmanuel Moseley got to play almost equal snaps in the last game against Green Bay, how much did that help in making your decision who would start this week?

“Looking at everything, letting them go through the week and competing and doing all those things. As we get closer, we'll be able to have a decision.”

When you go back and look at the Green Bay game, do you think you did just about everything perfectly? Were there issues?

“No, there's always things that you no matter what it looks like, I promise they're looking at some clips on tape where they know that they could have hit us on. There's clips in the past, our previous opponents, where we've left some windows open for quarterbacks and coordinators to be able to go exploit. We've got to be very, very aware that's part of our system. Be very aware of what you're putting on tape and what offenses can do to you and what they're actually looking for, and find a way to clog those holes without disrupting what you do philosophically.”

How important is DB Jimmie Ward to the fact that you guys have been so good at not allowing explosive plays in the passing game?

“Jimmie's versatility, I don't know if there's, I don't want to blur it, but there's not a lot of free safeties like him who is an exceptional cover guy along with the range he has in the middle of the field and his ability to do different things and the instinctiveness that he plays with, the physicality that he plays with. Knock on wood for him, we've always said that if he could stay healthy, people would recognize how special he is, and he's just got to continue staying the course, keep taking care of his body, keep doing the things he's doing. But, having his versatility is always an asset.”

You mentioned the physicality. How difficult is it for him to avoid those illegal hits on some of those bigger hits that he does have?

“I think [defensive backs/passing game coordinator] Joe Woods and [safeties coach] Daniel Bullocks do a phenomenal continually harp, we talk about the strike zone below the neck, above the knees, leading with your shoulder, leverage-side tackling so you're not getting your head involved, we're always near-sided shoulder. I think it just goes with the overall philosophy on how we tackle, keeping your head out of the game and understanding your aiming points, and a guy like Jimmie who can move at the speed he does and to be able to target the way he does without creating penalties is special. That's what makes him unique.”

How has your defensive line grown in terms of rushing together throughout the course of the year, understanding how each other works and things like that?

“They've, [defensive line coach Kris] Kocurek does a great job with those guys, and there is no stone left unturned with that group. Now, we've had some turnover on the D-Line, so it has taken a little bit of time, but you could see that they are very comfortable with each other. There is a very clear style to the way they're pass rushing and what they're being asked to do. They continue to get better, and it's not too late in the season. It's like we talked about today, it's not too late in the season to continue to get better, and so just approaching every practice with that intent so when you get to game day you're playing at peak performance.”

You mentioned Kocurek. He's working with a lot of talent, obviously, in that line, but what does he do to maximize that and get a lot out of them?

“Philosophically for our defense, we've talked about it up here, you as a football coach, it's our responsibility that you eliminate all gray area for the players so he can just go play, and Kocurek has a very, very specific way he teaches. It clears up all the gray area, and it's very, when you can put a player into black and white, it just allows them to go fast because they know what's being asked of them. And his ability to be detailed, clear all the gray and really teach and drill everything that's going to happen to him on game day is what makes him a very, very good football coach.”

T Joe Staley said after the game on Saturday, talking about the defensive line, that DL Dee Ford is sort of the key that unlocks everything. Do you know what he means and could you elaborate on that?

“Yeah, when you've got, I'll try to do this as best I can in layman's terms, but when you've got a speed guy like Dee Ford, it's very hard for that left tackle or right tackle, whoever he's lining up on, to be able to hang in there and not honor that speed off the edge because if you hesitate for a second with Dee Ford he's gone off the edge and it's over. So, it just puts those tackles in a little bit more, it gives them a little bit more sense of urgency to get back in their protection. When that happens, it opens up that B-gap, so when there's space created for that offensive line, now you're getting those guys on islands, and it just creates a lot of one-on-ones for those guys, and so when you're looking at [DL DeForest Buckner] Buck and [DL Arik] Armstead, who are just massive human beings, who are more power rushers, the more space the better. So, with [DL Nick] Bosa and Ford, when they can create all that space for those guys, it just makes those guys even better on the inside.”

Head coach Kyle Shanahan admits that he can be tough on coaches, maybe especially tough on you just because it's offense versus defense. Having known him in Houston, did you expect that? How have you had to adjust to that?

“Give that to me one more time, I'm sorry.”

Kyle admits that he's tough on his coaches.

“Oh, yeah. He's, there's a difference between attacking and challenging, and Kyle is phenomenal at challenging his coaches to always achieve more. I've been around coaches who attack people and they get nothing. Kyle's art and the way he coaches is he challenges you to do more and look beyond the box, look outside the box, look outside what you're comfortable with so you can continually get better. Much different than the tone that a lot of coaches that I've been around where they just attack you and demean you for one reason or another. It's fully expected from Kyle. He's been that way his entire career. He expects greatness, and you're not being great unless you're challenging yourself, and hopefully I'm answering your question, but just Kyle, knowing him that long.”

Has your relationship with him evolved over these three years?

“Yeah, I would like to think so, just from a trust standpoint and understanding so we can learn how to communicate with one another better. There's always that, we've always known of each other, obviously, and we've always been around each other and we've always hung out, but when you get into the football world, being able to communicate with one another and understanding how he sees the game versus how I see the game and being able to mesh those two together so we can have a good, solid conversation, yeah, that's always happening.”

In your experience, is it a blessing or a curse to face a team a second time around, especially after having success?

“I don't know. I've been on both ends. I think 2013 we beat the brakes off of New Orleans on Monday Night Football in Seattle, and then they came into the Division Round and it went down to the wires. I've been on teams where we lost badly two times in a row, and vice versa. Every game is independent of itself, and you just, you look at stuff, obviously, but you take the approach that every game is independent, and you attack each game as

its own championship moment, and you prepare the best you can and you let the chips fall where they may.”

Can you talk about the relationship between Kyle and general manager John Lynch? You've seen other tandems on other teams.

“Yeah, so Kyle and John, very similar. I'm just speaking from past experience with [Seattle Seahawks head coach] Pete [Carroll] and [Seattle Seahawks general manager] John Schneider, you know, the working relationship they have is phenomenal. You can tell that they're locked at the hip. Even in the event they may disagree, it is a very respectful conversation. They really do a good job uniting and unifying the entire building so the scouts, coaches, everybody is all on the same page with what's being asked of them. The message is very clear. I can't tip my hat off enough to those two and how they lead us and the way they treat one another for the entire building to see that.”

How did you evaluate Moseley's play after coming in against the Vikings, and where have you maybe seen him make the most strides from the beginning of the season until now?

“Moseley did a really nice job. He's unflappable. He plays his game. He's got a tremendous mindset to him. He's always striving to get better. It's not always clean, but nobody ever is. But you know, it's no different than Spoon. He's always striving to get better and do things the right way. But for Mosley, his mindset is what makes him tick.”

You used the word unflappable. Is that a learned skill or is that a God-given gift?

“That's a good question. I think I'm trying to figure that one out myself. I guess the more confidence you get, the more unflappable you'll be, but it's like what comes first, the chicken or the egg.”

You said your focus was on the team and the coaching, but you did interview with the Browns. They hired someone else. Is there a disappointment in that or is this process something that you learn from?

“No, there's no disappointment. I'm very grateful for the Browns and having me be a part of it, but just actually I'm a really big fan of [Cleveland Browns owner] Jimmy Haslam and what he did and what they're going to go through. I think they've got something going and I think they hired the right guy and they've got a chance to do something special, so I'm excited to see him progress.”

What was your reaction to Kyle being really pumped up and really excited that you did not get the job?

“It's like a backhanded compliment, right? No, he's, I don't know if it, Kyle has always been a big supporter. He supports his staff. He really supports everybody. He is not one to look at a coach and say, I've got to get rid of this dude. His first instinct is to try to make you better and help you get better. So you've, to understand Kyle and to work with Kyle is really a gift that I think a lot of people should have once in their life because of the fact that he's always striving to help you get better, and that's what I think makes this organization tick is that everybody in this organization is always trying to help each other get better, and because of it, Kyle feels invested in all his coaches, and I do believe him

when he says that he's happy because he feels like he's invested in me, which he has, and because of it, I take it as a compliment.”