

TRANSCRIPTIONS



**Head Coach Kyle Shanahan
Press Conference – October 14, 2019
San Francisco 49ers**

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Opening comments:

“For the injuries, [DL] D.J. Jones ended up being a hamstring strain, he’ll be questionable this week, he’ll be day-to-day. [WR] Deebo [Samuel] ended up with a groin strain, he’s in the same boat as D.J. [CB] K’Waun [Williams] had a hand, he should be good to go at practice Wednesday. [CB] Richard Sherman] Sherm with his stinger should be good to go also. Go ahead.”

Deebo was a quad?

“I thought it was a quad, groin strain. Yep.”

The improvement in the defense, is it simply a matter of getting the personnel in place or is defensive coordinator Robert Saleh doing a better job in some ways this year than he had his first couple years?

“I mean, I think everybody gets better the more reps they get, especially when you’re a smart guy like him and you work hard at it. I think our personnel has gotten better, which makes it easier to get better as a coach, too, and I also think some of the things we’ve been doing, just like coaches get better with more reps, so do players. A lot of guys have gotten to play over these last couple years, guys like [LB] Fred [Warner] and stuff like that, so they’re better now. The pieces we’ve added are better, and I think our coaches have gotten better at using our personnel, also.”

I know we talk about the pass rush having that effect on the secondary. In the rare times the pass rush hasn’t gotten home, have the coverages become more complex? Has Saleh been mixing and matching more this year or would you say that’s remained about the same?

“I think each game plan’s a little bit different. I think we have the same coverages we’ve had last year. But no, I think you mix things up a little bit more. I think the more confidence you do have in the pass rush, the more you have the confidence to do it as a coach. I want to say there’s a bunch of new things, but anytime you change your front with how you play those guys on the D-Line, especially in base situations, we used to always have a linebacker on the D-Line, now it’s four D-Linemen. Even though you’re playing some similar coverages, with three, four under, it might look a little bit different because of where they’re coming from. Same thing with our quarters and things like that. I think all of it’s a little bit of a different look, but structurally, it’s not a ton of new stuff.”

How happy are you in terms of your guys' third down offense and QB Jimmy Garoppolo's ability to move the chains?

"I have been pleased with it, never satisfied. I want to continue to get better, but anytime you can run the ball 40 times in a game and you're only averaging three yards a carry, it means you've got to get a first down somewhere. Doing that on third down and being able to do that, moving the chains allows you to do that. I think our guys have done a good job at that all year. Much better than these past two years. Still think there's a number we would like to have back, but no, I think they've stepped it up in that area."

There was one completion he had where he escaped kind of the pocket or stepped up in it and found TE George Kittle. What did that play tell you about him and the offense in general?

"It was an impressive play because he got to the third guy in the progression versus a very good pass rush. I want to say that was our second third down of the game. Our first third down, we got a sack on pretty fast. I think our second third down, we drew them off-sides, I think, and got five yards. I want to say that was our third one, but we hadn't had really a chance to sit in the pocket very long and one and two weren't there and he got to number three, so the O-Line did a good enough job to allow him to move. I think he moved to the right and stepped up a little bit and found Kittle there late, which showed poise and showed confidence in the O-Line, also."

You guys struggled a little bit in the division these last couple of years. How important was it to get off to a good start this season against the NFC West?

"I think very important. We struggled with a number of things in our first two years, but I would say that would be at least tied for the biggest one. If you don't win your division, no matter what you do, it's hard to ever have a chance at the playoffs. The easiest way to get there is to win your division. We were real happy with how we started out, being 4-0, but it's a whole new ball game when you first open it up versus your division. To have that versus the Rams, a team who has kind of dominated this division the last two years, I think it was a big step for our team and hopefully we'll continue going forward with it."

Obviously, there's always urgency when it comes to winning those games, but do you look at what Seattle's doing right now and how conscious are you of the season that they're having so far?

"Not very. We always watch scores, we watch for the whole league, but the importance of it always goes to your division first. You do see that stuff, but it's so early. I try not to look at schedules very much in advance. I don't know who they're playing this week. It's early in the season. I know who we're playing, and that's about it. You do look at it a little bit more towards the end of the year when you're trying to be in that situation, but it's still a ways away before we would consider looking into that stuff."

Where is Jimmy as far as the decision making and how he executes what he's being coached to do?

"I think Jimmy's doing a good job. He hasn't had a perfect game yet and I don't think I've ever had someone who's had a perfect game, so we'll keep trying to get him there."

Sometimes it can be tough for a quarterback when we're managing the game a lot with our defense, when they get us to some leads and the way they're playing. There come times in certain games where you feel the only chance for the other team to win is if we turn it over, so you try to get in those situations where you want to eliminate the possibilities of that. But, it can also get frustrating because as a quarterback, receivers, or even a calling plays for passing, you'd like more than just one opportunity, not just third down, to get in a little bit of rhythm. He doesn't get that all the time, and when he has, I think he's been pretty good. The fumble was unfortunate yesterday. Didn't have any guys open on the route, but he has to take that sack. Giving that fumble up gave them a chance to get back in, but our defense stopped them on fourth down, so it ended pretty fast. Those are the things you're aware of. But, him pulling that ball on the fourth-and-one, getting the first down for us, keeping us on the field on the zone-read play, which we major in, he did a real good job of it. We had a play action where the pocket broke down and he was able to escape and make a great off-schedule play to [TE] Levine [Toilolo], which got us into a third-and-one. And then just some of the throws he's made. He's done a good job. I know he'd love to have that one back on the goal line. There's some other things that bothered us with the play, but Jimmy's done a good job giving us definitely a chance to win, especially with how good our team's been playing around him, continuing to push him to get better, though."

It seemed like there were some times where he'll take some chances. He kind of has that gun slinger gene in him a little bit. Do you like that or do you want to see him kind of be a little bit more conservative with some of his throw selection?

"Yes and no. I like a guy who naturally is that way. I'd like to say I'm naturally that way. I want a guy who's not scared to make the big play and who's going to put it more on his shoulders and not always try to play it safe. But, you've also got to adjust your team too. The number one thing is how do we win this game and there's so many different ways to win football games. We've found a way of doing it in all five of ours and all five have been different, but that's things that you've got to work on as a play caller, which are things I'm going through and also as a quarterback. I don't think I've ever been on a team with a defense in the top 10. Obviously, ours is that right now and that does change things up, not just for a play caller, but also for a quarterback. There's a time and place. You are responsible for that ball and you've got the whole team counting on you. Sometimes we're counting on you to give us a chance to win and sometimes we've got to count on you to not give the other team a chance."

We saw his most action so far?

"Who's that?"

Levine Toilolo. Aside from that catch on the off-schedule play, did you have him in there helping pass block? Was that a big part of his increased time?

"Yeah, that's one of the things he does the best. Using [TE Ross] Dwelley in the fullback role more often than not, taking over completely for [FB Kyle Juszczyk] Juice in that area. Got him some more opportunities, especially on our two tight end personnels, which is probably hard to figure out since all three of them are technically tight ends, but we're using them differently, hopefully no one can tell how. But no, Levine is great in pass

protection. He's very good at blocking. We don't have a lot of things where we're just designing up stuff for him to be number one in the progression, but when we have come to him I know we haven't much this year, but at least teams that I've been on with him in the past he's usually sure handed, makes the play and he did a good job in protection on that play, on cover for an off-schedule and did a hell of a job at making a guy miss and getting us into a, I think it was a third-and-one he got us into. We have Levine do a lot of the dirty work so you're not going to see a lot of him, but it's always nice when he can get a check down or something and turn it into a play."

How did Dwelley do in that fullback role and also how'd the two tackles do?

"Dwelley I thought was very impressive just playing a position that he hasn't done. It was funny throwing him into the position. He practices it at times, he's always got to be ready mentally. Him having to go in there in the heat of battle last week versus Cleveland was a little different for him. He knew he knew the stuff, but you get thrown in there and you get to do some reps of it, but then you get the whole week of practicing it. Dwelley is extremely efficient, he knows what he's doing, he's very smart, he works at every little thing, he's very deliberate in his footwork, where his eyes are. Juice was in his ear all last week and Dwelley's the type of guy that can absorb it all in. He can take a lot of information, look at himself, he usually transfers to the game and to watch him go out into that game, they did a bunch of stuff that they haven't done in the past which changes up your game plan as it goes and to put some pressure on him that we had going in and then having to adjust it throughout the game, I give a lot of credit to him for the situation he was in and how he handled it."

And the two tackles?

"Very similar. It's a very tough position to be in, especially some of those pass rushers. The third play of the game they got in a good front where they got [Los Angeles Rams DT Aaron] Donald one-on-one on [OL Justin] Skule on the very first pass play and he ended up giving up a sack. Those are the things that I kind of meant with Skule, that a lot of guys on the first pass play giving up a sack in a big game like that, especially going against a player like that, they can kind of melt. They can lose their confidence in a game and it takes some time to get it back. Skule stays the same and went right back out there the next third down and did a good job blocking, that was the one we hit [TE George] Kittle on. Definitely battled. They weren't perfect the entire game, but they're one of the reasons we won. They allowed us to run it that much and they played with a toughness and gave us some good looks."

You've obviously had multiple guys that have had to step in. Is there a trickle-down effect where if Skule goes in and does a good job and then when OL Daniel Brunskill has to do it, he can look at him and say well if he can do it I can do it. Is that a thing?

"I think so. I think you'd have to ask players that. I think it's neat when guys see people go. When people go in there for the first time the whole team wants to see them and then you start to go through the game and you realize the whole world is not on that person's shoulders, no one's ever just thrown out by themselves. You always try to take care of people who are out there for their first time. It gets a little bit harder with the more variables

that there are, going into that game with the tackles and the fullbacks so we had some new things. A number of our guys went down during the game, but I think it's made our offense just tougher. The guys are a lot more resilient. There's a time in that game, especially towards the end, when Deebo and [WR] Marquise [Goodwin] were both out. [RB] Tevin [Coleman] and [RB Matt] Breida were both out and Kittle was out. We were finishing the game with guys who we trust and who have played, guys like [RB] Raheem [Mostert] who had to come in, Kittle was out on that last drive with all our tight ends trying to do it. We got one receiver in with [WR] Dante [Pettis] left and then [WR Kendrick Bourne] KB was able to help out. We've got from top to bottom in every area and I think the guys start to develop the mentality that it doesn't matter who's out there and that's what you always want to say as a coach, but it's kind of hard to get it done and it's been a credit to our guys that they've been able to do that, get that confidence now going on for a few weeks and we're going to need that to keep going for a few more weeks until we get some of these guys back."

After the game, Brunskill, I'm sure because of his background, went out of his way to praise the practice squad in getting those guys ready. Is that a big emphasis for you, to make sure that the practice squad and the scout team feel like they're a part of this product that you guys show on Sunday?

"Yes, I think it is because it's the truth. They are a huge part and sometimes if you don't let them that, those guys work just as hard, they do just as much, sometimes they have to do more except on Sunday. They don't make nearly the amount of money, but they are expected to do all the same stuff. The work that goes into a week where they don't get much payoff, if our scout team comes out and gives the wrong looks on how a team's front is going to play and then you go into a game and it's different, it'll take us a whole quarter to adjust. You're practicing certain blocks versus how [DL Arik] Armstead might play a nine technique is going to be completely different to who we're going against plays a nine technique. But, if you go against that guy every week and they play it the same way you're going to start adjusting how to block Armstead. Then you get into a game and it's completely different and it's second-and-14 because of it. There's lots of stuff on scout team that you try to make look like what you're going against, but I think nothing's more important, as important, as the O-Line and D-Line."

Do you have an update on CB Ahkello Witherspoon and is there a chance he'll play on Sunday in Washington?

"No, he's going in the right direction. I think there's a better chance next week, but I do not expect having a chance this week."

What about T Joe Staley? We saw him doing some light conditioning before the game.

"Yeah, I'm still hoping for Arizona. That's where I'm looking at him for. So, maybe a chance for Carolina, but I would consider that very lucky, in my mind. I'm just hoping for Arizona."

Last season, Dante Pettis had some troubles corraling balls in traffic and whatnot, but yesterday he seemed to kind of make some strides in that area. What did you see from him after watching some film and how did you like how he has adjusted?

“Yeah, I mean especially the one that got us to the three-yard line. I mean, we knew we had a chance down the seam. We thought we could hold [Los Angeles Rams S Eric] Weddle and we didn’t. He was flying there all the way and just to watch Dante make a conscious decision just to go up for the ball, not care what happens, he went up for it aggressively, came down, made a hell of a play. Made a hell of a play a couple plays later in the back of the end zone. I know he was just a few inches out. I thought that was some good opportunities for Dante. Dante’s got a lot of ability, he’s getting better each week. Love having him on our team. I love how much he has really tried to improve here over this last month in every aspect. It doesn’t matter whether it is a pass play going over the middle, whether it is a pass play on the outside or whether it is a run play. He’s giving as much effort as anyone on our team and he’s one of the big reasons that we’ve been winning.”

What’s it taken to kind of help him get over these mental hurdles that you’ve mentioned the last few weeks?

“I think more just, you know, Dante is just a very intelligent guy and respectful. I think Dante has really learned how important every aspect of it is. I think Dante has been extremely gifted and talented his whole life and a lot of things have come very easy for him. He’s a very hard worker, but I think everything has come pretty easy for him. So, you don’t always realize there’s a whole other gear you can get to. And I think some of the adversity he faced in training camp and stuff and kind of hearing a little bit from me and hearing it from the other coaches, then going out and not being as good as he believes he should be and how he has been in the past, I think he did realize this isn’t just talk and I do need a little bit more urgency. And then you start to learn that through failing a couple times and I think he has gotten better each week. We definitely can see it, but the key is I know he can feel it and his urgency has picked up and so has every aspect of his game.”

What’s the plan for TE Garrett Celek?

“I think we’ve got a couple more weeks until he can come back. Hopefully he’ll be fine with all the things he’s got to get cleared on. If he is, we will throw him right into practice and see if he’s ready to go.”

Outside of the building, clearly expectations have been raised for this team since the start of the season. Do you sense some of that inside the building? Can you see more confidence in the locker room?

“Yes, definitely. We sensed it going into the season. I think we felt that in preseason. I think we knew we had a better team in preseason by the way practices went, by the way we were in games too, in the preseason games. We had a good, I think we were very confident going into the Tampa Bay game. By no means did we play perfect, but we found a way to win which gave us some more confidence. And then the way the Cincinnati game gave us a lot, found a way to win a hard game versus Pittsburgh and we continued to do it. Our guys believe that they can win, we’ve done that so far, but by no means do we fell

we've arrived. I mean, there's lots of things we can do better and we know teams are going to get better as we keep going. The main thing is that we do too."

You don't want your players to feel that they've arrived and that they've accomplished everything yet, but do you want them to have a little swagger? Do you want them to consider this team a Super Bowl contender right now?

"I want them to know that they can win every game that they go into no matter who's in front of them. I think our team does believe that. We have the people, we can put the schemes together, we have the talent to do it and we have the people who work at it that no matter what type of game we're in, we do very, really believe that we can win any game. That's where it starts with a good team. Now, I don't care how good you are, it's very tough to do that, but when you have that mindset and it's real from the work you've put in, from how talented you can see some of the guys are next to you, then it becomes real. The more you can win, the stronger it gets."

After pulling off what you did yesterday without your two starting tackles, without your swing tackle, without Kyle, do you ever, in the time when you are soaking in the victory, do you ever look back to maybe two years ago, maybe that game against Philadelphia where Garrett Celek was almost playing tackle? You guys obviously didn't have the depth.

"I don't look back to that game very much. You just brought up a bad scar. No, just joking. There's lots of that stuff in football and sometimes you get a little. Maybe it's on a quick plane ride or something, but the next day comes so fast. It's always about the next game, you move on pretty quick. One day hopefully I'll be a part of a team that wins the last game of the year, when it is the last game of the year, and when that happens I think you can spend a little bit of time sitting back and looking at all of it. But besides that, there's only one team that's happy so you're just plugging away trying to do the best that you can. Hopefully you can find a way to have a chance to be one of those teams at the end."

Any change on the Juice and T Mike McGlinchey timeline?

"No. Same thing."