

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

TRANSCRIPTIONS



**Defensive Coordinator Robert Saleh
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San Francisco 49ers
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We're two weeks in. Just an overview, how do you feel about the way your defense has performed?

“Both good and bad. The results are not what we want. If you look at yards and all that stuff, we don't look at that stuff. The bottom line is points. Trying to keep points off the board. Trying to give ourselves a chance to win every week. The thing that I'm excited about is that our style was represented last week. That's the biggest thing. That's all across the board for the entire team. If you're looking from a progress standpoint, I don't look at so much production as much as what it looks like on tape and the violence, the speed, attacking the ball, that's what I'm excited about.”

You guys were on the field for 79 plays. It would stand to reason that maybe late in the game you'd wear down a little bit. Do you think that's the case, but also how much do you guys have to emphasize third downs and getting off the field when you have those opportunities?

“Third down is a major emphasis, every week it is. We faced 12 more plays than we needed to that first drive just because a lack of execution on that first third-down and nine. We were in great position to get off the field. We got into the kill zone and now we just have to get off the field. We've got to tackle and that takes all 11 running to the ball because a lot of times that first guy does miss, but we can help ourselves a lot by being better on third down for sure.”

Speaking of that lack of execution on that particular play, it was a read-option play, a zone-read. Was the linebacker supposed to scrape or how do you coach that in particular?

“That was a fourth-and-one. That was the second sequence of third down. We had the quarterback accounted for, it was just a lack of execution.”

Obviously, every defense wants to be strong up the middle, but with LB Reuben Foster already out and now S Eric Reid out, what does that mean for this defense?

“The train keeps rolling. The NFL stops for nobody. So, we've just got to get the next guy ready. And there's no excuses in this league. We've just got to keep rolling and get ready to play.”

How did S Jaquiski Tartt come in this morning? Is he feeling any better than yesterday?

“You know what, I haven’t actually sat and asked him. I know he’s getting all his rehab. He’s trying to get himself ready for Thursday.”

If he can’t go, is it DB Adrian Colbert, next man up?

“You have Colbert and [DB] Lorenzo [Jerome] both. They’d be competing for that.”

I guess that was my question, with the strong safety playing close to the box a lot, are you looking for a certain amount of size in that player? Because I know Lorenzo is normally at the free safety spot.

“You have a prototype, but I think football players come in all shapes and sizes. They have all kinds of measurables. Yeah, you’d love to have a certain measurable, but right now the men we have in our room have to get it done.”

Is there a cut off time to where if you needed to add somebody to the roster over the next couple of days? Is there a time that you would need to know to make that decision?

“That one’s more for [head coach] Kyle [Shanahan] and [general manager] John [Lynch] to be honest with you.”

With 79 snaps and Thursday night, Thursday night is already a tough challenge, but can you do anything else just to make sure they’re as fresh as possible after that performance Sunday?

“Kyle has already done a great job delivering that message. [head strength & conditioning coach] Ray Wright and our training crew, [vice president of medical services/head athletic trainer Jeff Ferguson] Ferg and all them, they do a great job. Shoot, my message to guys is whatever they ask, double it up. This is a big mental, get your body right week and usually Thursday night is about which team can show up the freshest. The whole mindset is about us and getting ourselves ready to play over scheme.”

I’m sure you stressed all last week the importance of containing Seahawks QB Russell Wilson in the pocket. On that touchdown drive at the end of the fourth quarter, he broke contain a few times. What were the breakdowns on those plays?

“I’ll be honest, Russell, he’s been doing it for god knows how many years now, but it’s what he does. We had him. We had him in our grasp. We felt like we had a great plan for him, but there’s a reason why he gets paid so much money. He makes plays. He makes things happen and I still am in awe of the play he made to throw the touchdown. Going to his left, throwing across his body, player wrapped around his ankles and still to drop a dime where he did, the kid made a hell of a play.”

Last week you said that one of your goals was for the defense to dictate the course of the game regardless of whether you’re getting enough help from the offense or not. I know obviously towards the end of the game, that didn’t work.

But, was there a period there, especially towards the end of the third quarter, where you guys were digging in, where felt that you saw what you'd like to see?

"Midway through the third quarter, I thought we had an opportunity to blow the doors open. I think we had our hands on three footballs. One for sure could have been a pick-six. That's where, as a defense, we've got to get greedy. We've got to be opportunistic and when we have those opportunities and they come in bunches, and when you have an opportunity, there was a five-minute window or a two-series window in there where I felt that we could have completely blew the doors open and we missed it. In this league, momentum shifts so much that when you miss your opportunity, you're leaving the door open for anything to happen and that's where I just felt like we had a chance to really blow it open but we didn't. We missed the opportunity."

Why did we see LB Brock Coyle in there for a series there in the first half?

"He deserves it. He works his tail off and he works hard and we wanted to make sure that we got him some more reps. And to be honest with you, I feel he should probably get a little bit more. That's not an indictment on any of the other players as much as it is a testament to how he works and how he prepares himself every week."

Is he competing with LB Ray-Ray Armstrong for that starting spot or are they distinct?

"It's always competition. We're going to do our best to make sure the best 11 are on the field at all times. And Brock and Ray, they both have great strengths. They are different in their own way, but they both get the job done. And so, it'd be a disservice really to all three of them. It goes back to that mindset of trying to be as fresh as possible. If you have a guy like Brock, who can come in and perform the way he does then you take advantage of it."

What are his strengths?

"He's a great communicator. Knows everybody's job on the football field. Very, very strong at the point of attack and he is pretty athletic and fast. He's a good linebacker. He's started a lot of football games for Seattle when they needed him and he performed very, very well too. He's put in his time. He's put in his work and he deserves to play."

Did DL Solomon Thomas take a step forward this week?

"He takes a step forward every day. You want to talk about relentless in his work ethic, that young man has a chance to be special if he continues working the way he does."

He played more snaps than you had originally planned for him, but how did DB Jimmie Ward hold up over the course of the game for a guy who hasn't played?

"He held up well. The feedback was good, feels good. Man, he looked fast too. So, it's good to have him back. Hopefully he can stay healthy."

Assignment-wise he was good on everything?

"Yeah."

What are the challenges that Los Angeles Rams RB Todd Gurley's running style offers you guys?

"He's shifty. He's got speed. He does a good job bouncing and getting to the sideline. They do a really good job stressing your corners. For us, we've just got to corral him and make sure that we do a good job holding the edges and keep him inside the box."

Is he the fastest running back you guys will have faced so far?

"He might be. I'm not sure, they all look fast to me. [Seattle Seahawks RB Thomas] Rawls was pretty fast last week and so was that little rookie. Their play speed was pretty quick."

Is there anything in particular that you've noticed Los Angeles Rams QB Jared Goff is doing better this year that's led to some more success this year than last?

"I didn't get a chance to play Goff last year. I didn't even look at their tape last year, so I couldn't tell you. I know the people who were here a year ago think he's an improved quarterback and he's got a great scheme attached to him. So, you can see the improvement. The people that were here a year ago have mentioned that he's much improved."

So from your standpoint, the only Jared Goff you know is the 2017 Jared Goff from watching film?

"Yes. There was no reason to look at last year's tape."

Just because the system--?

"The system is different."

What do you admire about the offense you're going against?

"They all are tied into what we do. I do think our offense is one of the hardest offenses to game plan for. The things they do offensively, they put so much stress on you from a coverage standpoint and a run game standpoint. You've got to be disciplined and you've got to be very detailed in your approach because if you sleep for a second they can get you how they want."

LB Aaron Lynch played 30 snaps, I think, after being inactive in Week 1. What goes into that decision whether he's up or down? Is it matchup, is it how he prepares himself?

"It's a little bit of everything. It's like we've mentioned that there's starters all across the defensive line and they all work their tails off. I think [defensive line coach] Jeff [Zgonina] does a great job getting them all ready to play. There are matchup issues. There are things that we would need. You can only have so many up on gameday and he deserves to be up every week, but sometimes you just, based on the matchup, things might dictate otherwise."

Can you talk about CB K'Waun Williams? He had a really good game up in Seattle, two pass breakups, made a lot of nice reads, pre-snap recognition. Can you talk about his progress and how you see him fit moving forward?

“K’Waun, he’s been performing really well. He’ll even tell you one of those pass breakups were more of a missed opportunity instead of a PBU. But, he does everything you ask. He does things the right way. He’s physical. He plays fast and he’s just a very instinctive football player in there. So, again like I said, a lot of football players come in many shapes and sizes.”

You mentioned Gurley’s talents earlier. What did you notice that they did for him on Sunday versus the week before to kind of get him loose?

“They had their running style. They run the same offensive run game pretty much that we do. So, if there was anything unique, it looked all the same to me with their approach.”

What is the kill zone?

“The kill zone?”

Yes.

“It’s that check down area from the line of scrimmage to five yards past the line of scrimmage. Kill or be killed in that range. Legally.”

With extreme violence?

“With extreme violence. Absolutely.”

DL DeForest Buckner looked like he had a really good game. What stood out after reviewing the tape for you?

“He works his tail off. He plays with tremendous effort and he’s a problem. He’s just very unique with his size and length, his strength, especially for a three-technique. So, he is a problem. He is someone that you have to deal with every week and he’s not something you can simulate on a week-to-week basis if you’re an opposing defense trying to get it from your show team.”

Lorenzo didn’t play a lot in that first game, but what were your impressions of him against Carolina and what are some of the things you’ve been working with him on the last couple of weeks here?

“It’s the same thing. They’re all, even when we’re offense cards, defense servicing the offense from a card situation, last week was a great chance for all those guys, because Seattle runs pretty much the same scheme. For them to continue and understand, ‘Well I’m running the same scheme.’ Just as many reps as you can for those guys in any which way. Even when they’re back there, always working on your fundamentals. Any time you put yourself on tape, it’s kind of the message for everybody on that defense. When you put yourself on tape, when you’re on the football field, represent what you’re trying to represent and work the things that we’re trying to get you to do from a fundamental standpoint all within the schematics of what the offense needs. Again, it’s individual work and all that stuff. We’re just trying to make sure that they’re all progressing every single day.”