

General Manager John Lynch
Conference Call – January 30, 2017
San Francisco 49ers
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Opening comments:

“Hello everyone. I’m looking forward very soon to meeting you all in person. I just can’t tell you how humbled and excited I am for this unbelievable opportunity. I can tell you that two weeks ago I never thought that I’d be doing this and you know things change sometimes and fortunately I have a wonderful family that have supported me incredibly in my pursuit of this situation that arose and I’m also very fortunate and thankful to [49ers CEO] Jed York and to everybody else with the 49ers that found it fit and had enough confidence in me to ask me to take on this role. So, I’m very humbled and as I said, excited, and I can’t wait to get going.”

Can you maybe go back and just give us the genesis of this?

“Yeah, I can. It was a couple weeks ago. Our crew broadcasted the Seattle-Atlanta playoff game and somewhere in that week after, [Atlanta Falcons offensive coordinator] Kyle [Shanahan] and I caught up as we often do after a game that I broadcast of his and just told him how impressed I was and at that time I know that he was interviewing for a lot of jobs and we just started a conversation and at some point I indicated to him that, ‘Hey, you know Kyle three or four years ago I had conversations with the Denver Broncos about getting into management. In the recent months I’ve had a couple situations that arose with perspective owners and I’ve sat down with them and kind of shared my philosophies.’ I think I’ve always managed to, [Pittsburgh Steelers head coach] Mike Tomlin, who coached me, used to say be where you’re at. So, my focus was being the best broadcaster I could be, but there was a side of me that said, ‘You know, some day.’ [Denver Broncos executive vice president of football operations/general manager] John Elway is one of my good friends and I watched him. I was living in Denver when he went through that process. He was kind enough to invite me into the building for offseason meetings and such. That’s kind of been out there and I always said, I even said to my bosses at FOX if the right situation arose that it would be something that I would have to consider. Like I said, Kyle and I were in a conversation, he seemed to get excited, at that point he turned it over to Jed and [49ers chief strategy offices and executive vice president of football operations] Paraag [Marathe] and the rest moved fairly quickly.”

People see you as a real smart football mind, but what would you say to those who point out that you’ve never worked in a front office position and might have some trepidations based on that?

“I would say that I’m eager to earn their trust. I think the feelings that some might have there are natural. I was thinking earlier today, it wasn’t really conventional when I was playing up at Stanford. I went as a quarterback. I was off playing minor league baseball and [former Stanford University and 49ers head coach] Bill Walsh called me up because he had taken the job and I had moved over to safety and begged me to come back for my senior year because he thought I could become a Pro Bowl safety. I thought coach Walsh was crazy at the time, but he convinced me to do it. That wasn’t conventional. It wasn’t conventional when early in my career I struggled to get on the field and here I am this weekend as a finalist for the Pro Football Hall of Fame and knocking on that door. So, there’s a lot of things in my life that haven’t been conventional. I think I appreciate that Jed was willing to think outside the box and we just had a number of great conversations and you could feel the momentum building each time that we got together and finally when we actually got together in person and it just felt right. We asked a lot of tough questions. We took ourselves through that exercise. I did because I had to make a

decision in a real hurry. I didn't need the job. I had a really good job at FOX that I was very happy with, but every time we got together I could check another box and I presume Jed could check another box towards maybe this could become a reality, and it did. I would say, a long answer, but I would say, I understand that and I'm fully aware that myself, the team I put around me, we're going to have to earn the respect and the only way you do that is through your actions and for us that's showing it on the field. We've got a big task in front of us, but I can't tell you how excited I am to attack it."

I'm not sure as an analyst if you followed a lot of the 49ers this season or in the past, but what do you want to tackle first? As GM you have the Draft and everything. What area do you want to focus on first to get this team back to where it used to be?

"That's a great question. I think the answer is there's so much to attack. There's a lot going on and are we behind? Sure we are because I just got here. I just accepted this job last night. Can we overcome that? Absolutely we can and we're very fortunate that there's really good people, some talented people that are from the staffs that preceded this one and they are doing a lot of really great work and I can't wait to talk to those folks to tell them how much we appreciate that. I think though, the most important thing that I can do, I think it's really important that I articulate the vision that I have for this team to everyone in the building, because I know from playing for guys like Bill Walsh and [former NFL head coach] Tony Dungy and [former NFL head coach] Jon Gruden and [former NFL head coach] Mike Shanahan, I think that's the most important thing you can do is articulate, 'Here's who we want to be and here's the type of people we are looking for if you want to be a part of this thing.' I think that's really critical. And then I would say hand-in-hand with that, first of all we've got to evaluate what we have. I've got some commitments down here in Houston, I'm in Houston right now taking care some of the commitments I had to FOX. I think it's right that I honor those. Jed wanted me to honor those and so I'm doing that. But, I can't wait. I can't get the film in front of me quick enough just to evaluate this roster. I know it because I follow football on a broad sense, but it just takes time and there's no substitute for time and that's what, I think you first have to take inventory of what you have to see what we need and that's with the Draft and free agency. It's critical also to put together the staff that I'm going to be working with and a lot of those people are going to be in the building, we're going to go out and aggressively pursue some of the people I have relationships with that I think are the best in the business. And so, we are going to attack it very aggressively. Like I said, I just can't wait to get that process going and it's already started in many respects."

How is your staff coming along in terms of the hiring process and the guys that you are going to retain?

"Well, I've had a phone married to my ear all day long. I didn't know that was part of this job, but it certainly is and so I've had a phone to my ear all day and I've been working hard to try to do that. Some of the people, like I said, they are there in the building. I don't want to get into specifics too much. I will say for someone like Tom Gamble, he's got a ton of experience in this business and I'd be a fool not to sit down and soak that up and I'm eager to do that and like I said before, I'm very appreciative and I can't wait to communicate how appreciative I am to the people in the building that are working really hard while things are kind of in flux and very soon we are all going to all be working together. I'm very appreciative and eager. Outside, I don't want to get into specifics, but I can just tell you that we are going to be really aggressive. The response I can tell you has been magnificent from people who really want to be here."

What exactly are your duties as the GM? Are you in charge of the salary cap and contract negotiations? Will you oversee the scouting and college and pro personnel departments and will you have final say over the 53-man roster?

“I think a lot of those things are specifics that we’ve got to get to the point where the final strokes, I would say, as we get our head coach in order and all of those things. I can tell you that from the outset, what has been communicated to me is that we really want this to be a true partnership. Jed’s communicated that. Paraag has communicated that. That’s my wish. One of the great things, and I spoke earlier, and this doesn’t ensure you success, but I can tell you, one thing from being a broadcaster, you get invited into people’s buildings and like I said, this wasn’t like I’m sitting in there taking notes, stealing institutional knowledge. But, you do sit down with head coaches. You talk with management in the places you are. And I think the one common denominator that I’ve seen when I talk to folks, in places where they have successful cultures and results, everyone’s working in the same direction. In places that are inconsistent or are consistently poor franchises, you can see it because you can feel it because people from one side are coming up and saying, ‘Hey, if I had any players, we could get this thing going.’ Management is saying, ‘Hey, if we had some guys coaching these guys.’ That’s not what we’re going to be. We’re going to strive to create a culture where everyone’s working together. I think that’s one of my strengths. It’s something that I’ve done throughout my career is I’ve had an ability to bring people together. I’ve been out front oftentimes. I’ve been named captain. On a broadcast crew, you’re out front and I think that’s a strength of mine and whoever this head coach is going to be, that will be something that we all understand, that we’re likeminded in our pursuit of winning a championship. Also, making a real positive impact in the community in which we play. Making our fans proud is something that we’re going to be all about.”

This team has been lacking a cultural identity they can identify with. What type of culture identity do you plan on implementing here in San Francisco?

“I think one thing I learned in my time in Denver, [Denver Broncos Owner] Pat Bowlen I think did terrifically as an owner and I think it’s one thing that really drew me to the San Francisco 49ers, I was around here when they were winning championships. In those places, I think a lot of people, I think everyone wants to win championships but in a lot of places, there’s lip service being paid to the commitment to doing that. I think when you’re in a place, like when I was in Denver, the San Francisco 49ers that won all those championships, the Pittsburgh Steelers, everything they do is to give you the best chance to do just that. So, I think everybody that enters this building has to be single-minded in their mindset of that’s what we’re here to do. One thing I shared with Jed during the process, I also learned a great lesson from Tony Dungy early in my career, in our very first team meeting we ever had he spoke to that but he also said, ‘If that’s all we’ve done, we haven’t done enough,’ and he talked about the role we had in our community. So, I think you can do both. I think they enhance each other. I think that’s going to be at the forefront of the culture. And then I can tell you, I don’t want to make too many promises, the one promise I can make is of any team I’m going to be associated with, you’re going to have competitive players that want to compete, that live and breathe football, that are going to play hard. If they don’t play hard, we’re going to find players that will play hard. They’re going to do things right. We’re not going to be perfect both on and off the field, but we’re going to strive to be that and we’ll be tough and physical and I’m getting excited talking about it right now. That’s the kind of culture we’re going to try to bring.”

It was reported that you received a six-year contract. First of all, can you confirm that and also, that’s somewhat unprecedented, how important was it for you to have that kind of stability coming into this situation?

“I think when everything’s wrapped up, we can confirm things. But, what I can tell you is the commitment that Jed and the 49er organization have shown to me to make this thing come to fruition has been incredible. They identified that they wanted it to happen. They gauged my interest. I got things right with my family. I’m incredibly appreciative and fortunate in this world that things stayed quiet because what that did, it allowed me to truly assess this situation, to ask

the tough questions, to just kind of get with the people that I'm going to be working with and any elephant in the room, just get rid of it and ask questions. I didn't need the job. So, that gave me a great position to be able to kind of just be very forward and I asked those questions and I'm proud of the way that happened. I'm proud of the way they responded. I didn't want to put my family, a lot of people are saying why was it so important to be secretive? I've had people ask me that. I wanted to be able to best evaluate this situation as it developed and I thought it would be much easier if I didn't have the world breathing down my throat and most of all, it was out of respect to the people who employed me at FOX. But, more important than anything to my kids. My wife and I didn't want to put them in a situation until there was something concrete."

Just following up on that, could you give us a couple of examples of some of the tough questions that you had at the beginning of this process?

"Well, I think I can do it in broad strokes. A lot of it was the commitment. The commitment of resources. I can tell you that I spoke to, the genesis of this, starting with the conversation between Kyle Shanahan and I and Kyle must have been real fired up to have called Jed and put Jed in touch with me. I felt it was really important that I was vetted like any other general manager candidate was. I didn't want to be, just because someone liked me, that I was all of a sudden went to the front of the line. I wanted to be vetted. I wanted to be interviewed and that happened and I'm glad it did. I don't want to get into specifics of what we talked about. I think that will happen as we all get to know each other. But, I can tell you that they were very productive. We forced ourselves to find out a lot about each other in a short time and frankly, that needed to happen. I didn't want this to linger on. It wasn't fair to the organization and they wanted a quick resolution to things just because there's a lot of work to be done and I think we were able to do that and that's why this thing did come to fruition."

Do you report to Paraag Marathe? Is he your boss?

"Paraag's a guy that I'm really excited to work with in a number of roles supporting me and this organization. But, I report to Jed York and that's what I've been instructed. That's who I report to. Like I said, during this whole process, I was very up front. I'm smart enough to know what I don't know. I've negotiated my own contracts, I've been involved in those discussions, but I have not done that. And so, I feel real blessed that in our building, in Paraag, we have what numerous people have told me is one of the most skilled contract negotiators in the business. I'm excited about that."

What is it about working with Kyle that made this attractive to you?

"Well, I think we all are aware of the rules and we need to pump the breaks on that. Whoever our head coach is, I can tell you though and I think [49ers vice president of communications] Bob [Lange] tell me if I'm wrong, I can speak to where my admiration for Kyle Shanahan arises from. I was very public in the broadcasts that I did. I thought he was the catch, and this is long before I was ever thinking in this role, I was just thinking in my job as an analyst, I thought he was the catch of this head coaching cycle. I really did. I think it's one of the best years I've seen a coordinator have. But, when I talked to [Atlanta Falcons QB] Matt Ryan and the players on this team, they spoke of the leadership and the presence that Kyle had in front of that room. I think that in this league, again, I get to see a very global outlook of the league and there's a lot of really good coordinators, but there's some that really separate themselves. I just thought Kyle, he really did that this year. He has impressed me for a long time. This year he put it all together. And it wasn't just calling plays. It was setting up plays and he was doing things and as soon as I got in front of him and saw the other part, his philosophies and how they marry with mine and all those things it just got me really excited. So, those are my thoughts on Kyle."

You mentioned some of the coaches you played under who were influences on you. But, as you look to being part of a front office and making personnel evaluations, are there models you look to or guys you might bounce things off of who are known more as scouts or general managers?

"I think the best case is John Elway. Like I said, we're friendly. We both went to Stanford. There's a lot of parallels and when I came to Denver, he looked out for me and we became very close friends. He's one of my closest friends. So, I got to see a snapshot of what the role was like. Like I said, there was one offseason where he brought me in, I went to the Combine, kind of did all of that. I'm not into making comparisons, but I can tell you that I strive to attack this job in the same way he has. He's been excellent at it. He's also shown me that, he's given me the confidence in many ways that although we haven't done it, one thing I've told Jed over and over, I know what I don't know. And I'm not going to profess. I can't tell you that I've had 20 years in front offices, working my way up. But, what I do know, I know football. I'll put my football acumen up with most in this league. I know people and I know how to lead. As I've watched John, those are things he's done extremely well and what I strive to do in this role. I keep saying it, but I can't tell you how much I'm looking forward to just getting down to putting this thing together in the way that we see fit and putting this team together, I'm just talking about around me in the personnel department and the management department, when the Super Bowl's over to put our coaching staff together so that we can really get down and all work together to identify specifically what that culture is that we want to build, who those players are, the characteristics of the players. And I'm not going to make any promises other than what I told you earlier. We will compete, we will play hard and we will make you proud on and off the field. That's what we'll strive for. We're not going to be perfect, but we're going to give every effort towards doing that and making 49ers fans proud, making Jed York, the DeBartolo family, everybody associated really, really proud and getting this place back to where it belong. It's another thing, and I'll just finish with this, is people say, 'What attracted you to this job?' I understand this isn't just any organization. This is the San Francisco 49ers and it's a proud franchise. It's had a couple rough years and I've been there before as a player in Tampa. There's no better feeling than taking something that's fallen, now in Tampa, we had never been to the top, but I can tell you when we won a Super Bowl I've got to believe it was a little sweeter because of where we came from and I'm looking very forward to working towards that goal so we can all feel that again and we can make the 49er community proud of their team and proud of their organization."