

TRANSCRIPTIONS



**Defensive Coordinator Robert Saleh
Press Conference – July 30, 2019
San Francisco 49ers**

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A good day overall for the defense, especially the defensive backs?

“You know, they’re working pretty good. I just want to make sure they’re getting a little bit better every single day and competing their tails off. As long as they’re doing that, they’ll always have a chance.”

Why switch things up at free safety and get DB Tarvarius Moore some snaps there with the ones?

“No different than why [LB Dre] Greenlaw, linebackers are being shuffled in. Just want a little more, not versatility, but making sure that guys are getting the looks they need, getting the work that they need to be able to get better. As the preseason gets going or training camp gets going, we need to figure out who’s going to make this 53-man roster and giving guys different looks to see if they’re able to do it is very important.”

DB Adrian Colbert was under the spotlight yesterday with that first play on 11-on-11. It seemed like he was in position to make a play. What went wrong? What should, what’s the ideal reaction that the free safety should have there?

“For him, just stay top shoulder and run with the receiver. He looked to undercut it, got caught in a bad angle. If he stays top shoulder in that situation, he would give himself a better chance to play the ball in the air.”

Yesterday, RB Tevin Coleman talked about the defensive line and just how difficult they make the running game, how difficult it is to find creases. A lot has been made of their pass rushing ability, but can you talk about just how tight they are defending the run?

“The physicality, the get off and all that stuff of what they’re doing, it’s like organized chaos. So, they’re getting off, it’s very violent, there’s bodies flying all over the place. It is hard on our zone scheme for them, but we’re an eight-man front football team. We’re always going to have one available, one unblocked player. The offense has to go find it. The get off, the lanes that are being created, it’s been good. The chaos that they’re presenting with their get off and all that stuff has actually been pretty good.”

How much do you think the change in the three to four-point stance has helped with that?

“We were a three-point stance a year ago, it’s just more--.”

Everyone on the D-Line is four-point stance now is what I'm saying.

"To me, it's more of a forward lean and get off. So, a year ago, it wasn't as violent of a get-off as it is now. Now, the offense isn't giving us certain runs that I know we're going to get, which we work in walkthrough and all that stuff. I'm sure there's going to be a whole bunch of different runs that we're going to get, so we're working those. But, it presents a problem for the way our offense plays, but as far as other offenses, we're going to have to be able to adjust on the fly. Like where it's at so far."

Not only does it seem as though CB Richard Sherman pretty good, but he seems to gain confidence in practice. Where is he, you think?

"Sherman's very confident. He'll even tell you, he's not even close to where he can be, but he's very confident in the direction that he's going. Feels really good, his heel feel's great, his body feels great, he's lost weight, feels lean and he looks really good. Mentally, he's there and it's not fake. He's competing his tail off and he feels confident enough, the feel I'm getting is that he's getting back to that mental part of his game where he is now so confident in his physical ability that he can just focus on the mental part in terms of being in the right spot, getting his footwork right and being the player that he's been from a mental standpoint. He's getting there. He's not there yet, but he's getting there."

What have you seen from CB Jason Verrett? He looked like he was out there getting some hits in today?

"Yeah, I'm telling you, he's a man. I mean, you talk to him, he's got tremendous presence to him. There's no B.S. to him. He's a very physical corner. If you get a chance to shake his hand, put your forearm on his chest, just he's like a solid rock. He's an impressive football player, an impressive man. We're managing him to make sure he understands that he doesn't need to be an All-Pro player yet, just continue to get better, just climb the ladder, and get a little bit better every day. We'll continue the workload to increase it as it goes on, but excited about where he's at. He's only going to get better. He hasn't even scratched the surface of what he's capable of."

How much of an adjustment is it for you to work with this new training staff and the new plan they have in place, knowing you need to get guys reps to work at certain things, but also know their reps are limited and you're not necessarily in control of what you can have them do?

"I'm personally excited about it. I think it's a fantastic plan, what [general manager] John [Lynch], [head coach] Kyle [Shanahan] and the training staff have put together. It's well thought out, it makes sense. It is not old school where what we've done in the past is what everyone's done and it makes no sense. We are building for Week 1, and if you have to sacrifice a few reps here and there to be in the best physical condition you can be for Week 1, I would much rather have that, sacrifice a couple of reps to have that then the way it's been in the past in terms of not that it wasn't well thought out before, but just the way it's always been done doesn't necessarily mean it's always the right way. I'm actually very excited about the way we're doing things right now."

Do you have to adjust? Do you have to rethink some of the--?

“No.”

Did CB Ahkello Witherspoon tweak his knee?

“He banged it on the ground. It’s just precautionary from my understanding, but that’s going to be a question more for Kyle and them.”

And you chose to put DB Greg Mabin in for him instead of Verrett?

“Pitch count for Verrett. So, it’s, for Verrett, he’s on a specific workload.”

When you brought him in, you talked about bringing in competition for Ahkello Witherspoon. Do you expect that he’ll get to the point soon where he will be able to compete for that job?

“Absolutely. So, we’re only in day four, you know? You’ve got preseason games, you’ve got that big week in Denver coming up, you’ve got your third preseason game, the fourth preseason game, so there’s a lot of days left to get all of that figured out. I anticipate here within the next week or so that guys will start going full-go. The picture will start to clear I’d anticipate right around that Denver, end of the Denver week.”

DL Dee Ford was having that knee worked on a little bit just with the trainers. Is he alright?

“Yeah, he’s fine. Just aches and pains of training camp.”

Was that Dee?

“Dee, yes.”

How impressed were you with DL Ronald Blair III and do you think he can kind of take some guys by surprise with how athletic he is?

“I think so. I told you all my first one, if you like winning, you like Ronnie Blair. If you don’t like winning, you don’t like him. I love him to death. He can do no wrong in my book. He’s got great versatility. He’ll play nickel if you ask him to, and he’ll know what to do and he’ll execute.”

What’s your message to DL Kentavious Street just in terms of how you want him approaching this camp and what things you need to see from him?

“Kentavious, so OTAs showed a tremendous explosiveness during Phase 1, Phase 2. You’ve got bodies around him, you can expect a little hesitation because of the knee. These past two days, he’s really come into his own in terms of trusting his leg. I don’t know if you guys are aware, but he’s probably the strongest human in the weight room. These past two days that weight room strength is starting to transfer to the field, so for him, it’s continue building confidence, continue to get a little bit better every single day, and trust that your physical traits, your physical gifts, will take over. These past two days have been good. He’s just got to continue stacking them up.”

Where do you envision him sort of fitting in? You have a lot of guys with different skillsets, but you don’t really, I mean I think that his ability to just knock offensive linemen back is unique to him?

“He’s kind of in the same role, like [DL] Arik [Armstead], [DL Solomon Thomas] Solly in terms of he’s an edge center in the run game and he’s going make his hay inside rushing the passer. He’s got versatility inside and outside, but he’s going to be, he’s probably going to be a little more disruptive inside.”

With a guy like that who kind of had a unique situation last year, like a redshirt year, what did you learn about him through that process last year and how did he maybe kind of build to this point?

“So, same thing that I talk about Verrett that I’ll say with Street, he’s a grown man, he’s got his head on his shoulders. He’s very, very mature for his age and he goes about his business every single day and he’s got a focus. There’s no, I try to joke with him, there’s not much joking with him.”

So, last year when he’s going through that and you’re game planning every week and all that, do you check in on him?

“Yeah, absolutely. You drop in the weight room, see how he’s doing. He’s in meetings, you just talk to him, have different conversations, try to connect. My wife and I were at the movies and saw him and his wife, so it was all business then, too. He’s good, I like him.”

Last time we talked to you, DL Nick Bosa had just beaten T Joe Staley three times and you were saying, let’s slow down he’s still just a bobblehead. Since then, what’s your impression of him?

“He’s going to be a good football player. He’s got a really good skillset that is unique in terms of pass rushing and all that. His run game stuff has been good. He’s in the same boat as Street with regards to getting confidence that he’s just got to get a little bit better every single day and have confidence that his body’s alright. His workload, same thing, not that he’s on the severe pitch count that Jason Verrett’s on or anything like that, but we’re making sure he’s getting a little bit better. His workload’s going to pick up every single day and not just rush him into the fire.”

He’s the youngest guy on this team, but it looks like he’s got the body of a guy that’s been in the league for several years.”

“Is he the youngest? I had no idea.”

Yeah.

“Well, I mean, he’s got good genes.”

What is the imprint that defensive line coach Kris Kocurek already has put on the defensive line? I mean, it’s only a couple padded practices, but can you see the difference?

“Absolutely. You can feel the difference. Defense, you know, when you turn on the tape, you can see a very fast, physical defense, and that starts up front. The get-off, the speed, the violence, the way they run to the ball. There’s an old saying, defenses will be recognized as fast when the D-Line is wreaking havoc and will be recognized as a hard-hitting defense when the back end is hitting people. They’re really adding to the speed element of the game. I mean, they’re everywhere so far. It is only the fourth day of camp,

and they are still trying to figure stuff out. There's a lot of communication things that they've got to get better at with regards to games on third down and all that they're not even close with, but it's a good start."

There was a play where Bosa and Armstead collided, it looked a little awkward. Did you see what happened on that?

"Yeah, it goes back to the communication stuff. They're working on different games, they're working on different techniques, alignments, fronts. So, there's going to be some communication stuff, and those two, knock on wood, nothing big came of it. Communication for them is new with what they're doing up front, so that stuff is a long way from being sharp enough for Week 1."

So, it was a designed game and they just sort of--?

"Yeah, it's a designed game, yeah."

How's DB Tarvarius Moore playing at free safety? Do you plan to keep him there when DB Jimmie Ward comes back or is the plan to move him back to corner?

"Yeah, he's staying at free. He's been progressively getting better. He's by no means even close to being an NFL-ready safety by Week 1, but he is getting progressively better. He's got a lot of things to clean up with regards to, he's hesitating, which is expected. He's still new at the position, but he's got to get to the point where he's not really thinking about his job anymore where he can react and trigger, which is so important for our safety to be able to do."

Last time we saw you, going back to Kocurek, we talked about the high energy he brings every day. He's very unique in that sense, you know, different than most coaches. What makes you believe that that's not going to fizzle out and that's not going to lose players in the long run?

"You know, I'm a firm believer that if you possess two traits as a football coach, you can be whoever you want to be as a football coach. If a player knows you really, genuinely care about their well-being and their ability to get better and if you actually have the ability to help them get better with your techniques, your schematic knowledge, you can be crazy every day, you can be calm every day, you can be whoever you want every day, but if they know that in your heart you truly care about their well-being and the player knows that what you're telling them will help them make plays on Sunday, you can be whoever you want. His personality doesn't wear on people because he loves his guys, he cares so much about all of their well-being and he knows what he's talking about. Players feel that, they're not dumb. That's why his style can stay, he can keep his intensity constantly because, one, it's not fake, and that trait alone is why his personality won't fizzle out."