

TRANSCRIPTIONS



**Head Coach Kyle Shanahan
Press Conference – January 16, 2020
San Francisco 49ers**

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Opening comments:

“Morning guys. Injuries for today; [LB Kwon] Alexander will be limited, [RB Tevin] Coleman, full, [DL Dee] Ford, limited, [TE George] Kittle is full and [RB Raheem] Mostert’s full.”

You're not expecting the ankle issue for Kittle to be a problem on Sunday?

“No, I’m not.”

Did he surprise you with that yesterday, just the soreness?

“The soreness did a little bit. That’s why I didn’t bring it up in here before practice. But, I knew he had some wear and tear from the game, was a little sorer than we thought before practice. So, we held him out.”

After week 16, Los Angeles Rams QB Jared Goff was kept out of the pocket, doing rollouts and bootlegs. Is there any plan to counter that with Green Bay Packers QB Aaron Rodgers as Green Bay Packers head coach Matt LaFleur worked with Los Angeles Rams head coach Sean McVay, would probably do that as well?

“They do it every game. Sean does it every game and I do it every game. So, yeah, we’re always ready for it, for stopping the run. That’s what you do off of it. You’ve got to be prepared every week for that.”

Did George hurt the ankle in the third quarter, there’s a play that shows his--?

“I’m not sure what play he did it on.”

Speaking of Kittle, he had quiet numbers against the Vikings, obviously did other things for you. Is this the type of game, this type of opponent, that you would expect louder numbers from him? Do you go into a game thinking in those terms?

“No, I don’t. I really don’t at all. He has an opportunity to in every game. He’s always a big part of our plan. But, you never know how the game’s going to go until the game starts. And a lot of things go and you take into account over that. But, you have no idea what coverages they’re going to play, how the game’s going, but we’ll see. He always has a chance to.”

As far as your run game, the way the defense has played, the fact that you've never

really been out of the game, I assume you've never experienced a season like this where you truly never have to get away from it. Is that true and how nice has that been as a play caller?

"It's been very nice. I've never been on a team, I think there was one year I was on a team that was ranked 10th in defense, I think it was at Cleveland. But besides that, I've never been on a team with a top-10. And our team has played like a top defense. That's been great. I know we did go through these last six games. It hasn't, at the end of the year, it was a little different than that where we had to do some games, throwing the ball and things like that. But, noticed that earlier in the year, based off how those guys play it, it does affect your play calling. But, that's stuff you get a feel for during the game."

When you were looking at Kittle coming out of the Draft, what did you see that you liked and when did you kind of realize maybe that he was going to be not just a fifth-round pick who is a contributor but kind of the guy he is now?

"We thought, you watch tape on all the guys, people that you're given, a list of guys. And we had him as what we thought was the best tight end or one of the top tight ends in the Draft. But, he wasn't much on anyone's radar. So, we just assumed he was going to be around a third-round guy. And we had to go a different direction in that round and then we were just shocked that he was still sitting there in the fifth. But, he had all the measurables and everything you could see the stuff on tape. But, he didn't have a lot of production in the pass game. They didn't do that a lot at their school, they did more run game and he was a great run blocker. I feel like people called him just a run blocker just because he didn't have the stats. But, stats don't tell you much, it's how you move."

It seems like this year, as the year has gone on, especially you incorporated more gap and power runs to the zone stuff you typically do. Did something specific spur you to do that or was it just a natural evolution of your offense?

"No, you just have things that you believe in and what you do. And the more you do that stuff people are always going to figure out a way to stop it. Then you've got to figure out how they stopped it and what weaknesses that opens up. If people are committed to stopping outside zone that should help a number of other runs. You've got to get better at that. The more they worry about the other runs, then the better outside zone gets."

In terms of targets per game, Green Bay Packers WR Davante Adams is like behind only New Orleans Saints WR Michael Thomas and Atlanta Falcons WR Julio Jones. What goes into defending a receiver that gets the lion's share of the team's targets?

"I think you've got to understand when they target him, what type of coverages they go to him in, down and distance, things like that. There's lots of things to look into to try to figure out why and when. But, yeah, things like that."

As you put on the film of the Packers defense since your November meeting, in what ways are they different or improved that you can see on film?

"I thought they were good before we played them, I thought they were good when we played them and they've been even better since. I just think not a lot's changed on tape. I just think not many teams have done much on them. They've been holding people to a small amount of yards and a few points."

How important is it just to get off to a fast start like you did last time when you played the Packers?

“You always want to get off to a fast start. It's always better. But I mean, it's not everything. You just want to make sure you win it at the end.”

I assume as part of the way you were raised, but as far as the run game, as a play caller, is it fun sometimes to just air it out or is there a satisfaction grinding out wins?

“Are you trying to get me say something for your story? (Laughter) Yeah, I mean, I didn't play O-Line growing up. So, when I first became a coach all I wanted to do was throw it. I played receiver and quarterback my whole life. So, that's all you want to do. And you lean towards that, but the longer you do it, you realize that no matter how cool of passes you can draw up, you've got to protect, you've got to do things, you can't put all the pressure on the quarterback. And the thing that does make it a lot easier is being able to run the ball. Running the ball takes pressure off everyone and puts pressure on the defense.”

We all know that every season is a journey in and of itself. But, is there a moment that you can point to where you knew that this team really was special and had the stuff to get to this point or further and that your players also kind of realized it?

“I mean, I think it was pretty early on, I think it's happened in a number of different times throughout the year. There's so many ebbs and flows throughout a season. I felt after a Bye week, going down to LA, I think it was our fourth game beating the Rams, I think that was a big one for us. And then we had two games having to go to Washington to win that. But, yeah, I'd say it started out probably with the Rams game just because the way the three went before and then having to get over that hump, which we haven't yet. But, then it's always when you feel good, there's a number of times during the season you take a step back and then something's got to happen to go forward. That's happened a bunch. You look at the Green Bay game, but then we end up losing to Seattle. I thought a huge win was the second Cardinals game where we had to come back at the end and [RB] Jeff Wilson [Jr.] made a huge play for us in a two-minute deal that got us the win. And then the way we finished it during the regular season versus Seattle.”

In case you reach the Super Bowl, if you get into the Super Bowl, you'll be the first father and son in the Super Bowl. What does that mean to you and to your family?

“I'm sure that would mean something. But, it's hard for me to answer that now because I haven't thought about it. If I get there, I'll think about it.”

You've talked about your admiration for DB Jimmie Ward before, but the numbers obviously suggest you guys aren't giving up a ton in terms of explosive plays. How important has he been in that and how difficult is it for him to make some of those hits that he does make and do it legally without getting some of those flags?

“It's very difficult. It's very hard to have a violent hit in this league without a penalty just because of how fast it happens. It's hard to see for the refs and everyone. So, in order to do that and not get any penalties you've got to be a very skilled athlete, you've got to be

fearless, you've got to be running there at full speed not thinking about anything except where to put your shoulder pad. And he's done a great job of that. There's been some that have been violent where I'm just waiting for a flag. But the ref's saw it right, because you look at it on the big screen and he doesn't have a helmet-to-helmet. And he's been huge for us this year. I think everyone knows how big of a fan I am of Jimmie and it's been great that he's just been able to stay healthy this year."

How much does this team's chemistry have to do with where you guys are on the doorstep of the Super Bowl, liking each other and how well they get along play on how they do on the field?

"I thought we had some pretty good chemistry last year and we didn't do that well. I felt it strong this whole offseason. I think as you go through a season together and you have a lot of experiences, and most of those have been pretty positive this year, I think it only gets stronger. I think we were pretty special going into the year and based off how this year's gone, I think it's gone extremely strong."

When your dad was here before Super Bowl XXIX, former 49ers QB Steve Young told the story how he went over the script, went over the plan over and over and over. Are you like that with your quarterbacks before big games, will you be like that with QB Jimmie Garoppolo going over things over and over on Saturday?

"My dad was a coordinator here when that happened. I was much more like that in Atlanta, I was a coordinator, and I always meet with Jimmie, after practice and go through the tape and do it Saturday night and go through our top calls and stuff. Just the day-to-day, every second, that's more [passing game coordinator] Mike LaFleur and [quarterbacks coach] Shane [Day]."

Will the weather affect your practice plans at all?

"I'm still going to decide until a minute before walk-through. Looks pretty bad now. Right before I came here, I'd say yes. The meteorologists that our guy's talking to says it will die down a little bit. If it dies down a little bit, I'd like to stay."

A special teams question. Some of the kickoffs fall short of the goal line. They've been run back fairly far these last few weeks. Is that by design? Does P Mitch Wishnowsky have the leg?

"It wasn't by design. I think Mitch just missed a few. And on top of that, I think it was pretty windy out, he didn't have the best weather for it. So, when you have those conditions and you're not kicking it as well as you usually do, I think that's what the result was."

Kicking it towards the north end zone more difficult because that's where the wind is usually coming from?

"I believe so."

What makes a good blocking tight end? Are there any traits or abilities that that position requires?

"Yeah, I think it depends on what type of running game you're doing. I want explosive guys who can generate everything from the ground up, from their feet, legs, their hips."

You can just see the way Kittle runs and the way he moves, he's always going forward and coiling into people and it helps him in his routes, but it really helps him push people.”