

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

TRANSCRIPTIONS



**Defensive Coordinator Robert Saleh
Press Conference – September 14, 2017
San Francisco 49ers
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Bear with me, I'm doing a story on the history of this defense that you're playing. I was just wondering how far do the influences go back? Can you go back to the old Raiders and how they played press and maybe former NFL defensive coordinator Floyd Peters and what he did?

"Coach [Seattle Seahawks head coach] Pete [Carroll] always told stories back then. I couldn't get you many details on all that on my recall of what those stories were. I'm sure with coach Carroll and [former NFL defensive coordinator] coach [Monte] Kiffin there's a lot of football knowledge. To really pinpoint where all this stuff came from, that'd be more of a question for him."

With coach Kiffin, obviously he was a Tampa-Two, it was more of a two-deep thing. Now it's more of a one-deep thing. How did you get from the two to the one?

"The principles of it all remain the same, where you're in so much vision and emphasizing fundamentals and technique over scheme. There's similarities obviously. If you really looked at it from a scheme standpoint you could kind of say, 'Well he's just like the hook player.' Or, 'He's just like the buzz player.' Whatever you want to call it. So, there's similarities there and how it got to cover one was it's all in philosophy and how you're trying to approach things I guess."

Are you able to rely on your familiarity with that offense, having practiced against it during your time there? Or do you look at it that they're drastically different?

"There's some similarities, but also it's been almost three years now. Little over three years. So, I'm sure there's a lot of nuances. I couldn't even tell you what the verbiage was back then. I don't have the recall on that. But, when you watch a tape they have a ton of playmakers and they do a great job putting those playmakers in positions to make plays. That has remained consistent. Of course, it always starts with their run game. They try to establish a line of scrimmage and [Seattle Seahawks offensive line coach] coach [Tom] Cable does a great job getting those guys ready to play. Again, from a familiarity standpoint and their message, understanding what they try to do offensively maybe. But, they're a well-coached football team and they've got playmakers all over the place."

What were some of your more memorable duties when you were up there?

“It was a cool time. Just from a memory standpoint, just swallowing and absorbing all that information that was there. From philosophy to [Los Angeles Chargers defensive coordinator] coach [Gus] Bradley and preparation. [Oakland Raiders defensive coordinator] coach [Ken] Norton [Jr.] and his view from a player perspective. There’s just so much information to gather that I had not been exposed to as an individual. So, my growth as a man, as a coach, as a person. That would be the most memorable thing for me. Just the overall information that was allotted to us.”

In some ways that defense that year was historically good. When you were in the middle of it, did you realize that you were a part of something special there?

“Yeah. Because I was in Houston for six years before that. We had decent defenses, but you recognize, it was like right when we got there. Like, ‘Man these guys are a lot different than what we had in Houston,’ at that time. To see those guys just taste a little bit of success and to see [Seattle Seahawks S] Earl [Thomas], [Seattle Seahawks CB] Richard [Sherman], [Seattle Seahawks S] Kam [Chancellor]. [Seattle Seahawks LB] Bobby Wagner was a rookie, [Seattle Seahawks LB] KJ Wright. Then once [Seattle Seahawks DL] Michael Bennett, and [Seattle Seahawks DL] Cliff Avril came in it was like they just took that thing completely over. It’s a testament to them, the leadership that they provide. The best coached teams are teams that coach themselves. Those guys are well oiled in that regard.”

Do you see any of that in your guys here? Obviously not yet, it’s a development process, but do you have that kind of leadership, the kind of player that you feel could eventually kind of coach himself?

“I think it’s in every player to be a servant leader and to really provide leadership to all the people around them. Servant leadership to me is the ultimate form a leadership where anyone, from a rookie to a veteran, can put himself in a position to help everyone around him get better. Doesn’t matter whether you’re the star or not, you can provide leadership. So, have those guys come to fruition yet? I have an idea. I’m not going to name names or anything. But, I’m excited for this group because they really believe in the things they’re capable of and they really believe in the system. It’s cool to see other teams like Jacksonville, Atlanta, Seattle and now the Chargers to have success, and them understand they can do that too. There’s a lot of tape for them to watch to show that what we’re asking, they’re capable of. Especially this group. From a maturation standpoint, they’re so young. I do believe that it’s in this group.”

What kind of influence did Pete have on you and your development as a coach?

“The biggest influence I took from coach Carroll is from a philosophy standpoint. Understanding who you are as a person. Understanding what’s important to you as a person. And, how to apply it to the message that you’re trying to deliver. Understanding that everybody has a style and that every style is the right style provided you apply it in the right way. So, just from a philosophy standpoint, speaking to people, handling people is where I have my greatest growth from coach Carroll.”

You mentioned the playmakers on Seattle's offense. That offensive line has a few new faces, they lost their left tackle in the preseason. What have you seen from that group so far, just in the first week?

"Like I said, I think coach Cable is one of the finest O-Line coaches in all of football. The message he delivers is awesome from a physicality standpoint. I know that whatever trouble they had last week will not be an issue this week. In our mind, we're getting ready to play a prepared team that's very well coached. I never take a player for granted. I do believe that they're going to be very well prepared to play us on Sunday. Especially at home."

How'd S Jaquiski Tartt do in his first start at single high safety?

"I thought he did a really, really, really good job. He had a couple of plays that he wishes he could have back. But, he played fast, he was physical, had a key takeaway. Like everybody else on the defense, they would all tell you the same thing, that there's a couple plays that each player wishes that they could have back. Thought we could've played a very dominant football game on Sunday. It was really cool for those guys to see it on Monday that we were close to playing a dominant game, as opposed to the game that we did play."

That 40-yard pass, obviously he should've knocked the guy out of bounds. How did the wide receiver get so open?

"There was a mistake in coverage and he got open."

It looked like one of the cornerbacks was playing man while the rest of the defense was playing three-deep zone. Is that an issue of preparation, focus? How did that breakdown happen on that play?

"I believe that the guys prepare. I do believe that. I know we rep'd it a couple times in practice. That's the cool part of this league. You can cover things 100 times. A player can go through it, a player can be very comfortable in what their assignments are, but you can never simulate the exhaustion and the amount of hyper-focus that you've got to get to when you're just dog tired. That's the challenge. To be able to get to that point within a 20-second timeframe. You get the call, you get aligned, you survey the formation, and the ball is snapped. And you're exhausted. That's why I'll always say a player never gets paid enough in this league. For what we ask them to do and the things that they actually do on a day-to-day basis, and on game day. It is hard. You wish that those mistakes don't happen. They do, but now how can we fix it. Of course, we go back to the eraser, getting that thing out of bounds, giving us a chance to play another down."

Carolina Panthers QB Cam Newton wasn't sacked Sunday. There's some metrics out there that indicated he wasn't pressured very often either. How do you diagnose the issues with the pass rush?

"I thought they did a great job even leading into the game. They did a great job protecting Cam. He's got one of the deeper set points in the league at almost eight and a half, nine yards. Their offensive line does a great job holding the point and giving him, he's such a big body, he can stand in there and take a pounding. We do recognize that

we need to get after the quarterback. We do need to affect him. And like I said, every week is different. We're going to approach this week different than we did with Cam. Just from a D-Line standpoint, I don't know if I can say it's much different, they're both running quarterbacks so they both present very similar issues. But, there's no question it's got to be better."

What are your objectives with LB Reuben Foster in his time when he's not able to play? What do you want him to be doing?

"Learn. Just watch tape. Try to take in as much information as he can and to really focus on his body, getting it right. If he can come out of this really understanding the way we're being attacked and to be able to really see what teams do to our scheme would be very beneficial."

Is he not understanding that now?

"He does, but there's nothing like live reps and there's nothing like seeing it. You can coach it until you're blue in the face, but until you actually see it or actually even go through it, I always mess with the backers or even defensive players in general that there's nothing like getting scarred. You never forget a scar and when you're performing a technique and you get exposed at that technique, getting scarred is what helps you grow. So, for him, being able to see that through his teammates, like I always saw my brother get beat by my mom once and a while, my dad and I would be like, 'Darn, I'm not going to do that.' So, I felt like I had great growth. Didn't have to actually go through it to learn from it, so kind of the same thing."

You were with Seattle during the height of the rivalry with the 49ers. In terms of extreme violence, were those among the most extreme violent games you witnessed?

"They were physical, but we felt on defense that we brought that every week. It didn't matter the opponent. Every game is a championship game and you treat every opponent the same. And when you play a great team, you'll make them look normal and when you play a poor team, you'll just beat the daylights out of them. That's the mindset we took every week. That's the mindset we're trying to develop here, that it doesn't matter the opponent, you play to your level, you play to your highest level and it always comes back to us and how we operate. Those were fun, but it never was about San Francisco. It was about us and showcasing who we were to the world."

Seattle Seahawks QB Russel Wilson changed his body a little bit in the offseason. Has that, it's a very small sample obviously, but has that changed his game at all? Is he a little bit different?

"He looks the same to me. Runs around, makes plays, great arm. He's a problem."

You said scars earlier, are you talking about making mistakes and sort of learning from those?

"Yeah, like getting beat in man coverage. Just the technique you used and you're like, 'Darn that technique.' Notch it up as a scar in his belt, so he'll learn from it. But, hopefully he can recognize those from the game and just recognize what's happening to

his brothers in his room, so he can learn from those hopefully. And, he should. He's a really smart kid, too."

You had some busted coverages and you gave up 23 points, but you didn't give up very many yards and you were very tough against the run. I believe it was like 3.1 yards per carry. So, how would you assess the defense overall in that Week 1 game?

"We didn't win. There's two types of mindset, there are those who are happy to not be the reason why you lost. Am I making sense? And then there are those that are happy to be the reason why we won. For us to reach and arrive on stage, we've got to understand that we've got to dictate games. And once we reach that mindset that we will dictate the outcome of a football game, that's when we will have arrived on stage, if you will."

You mentioned earlier that you had felt you were close to having a good game earlier in this press conference. So, did I read that wrong?

"No, I felt like we could have dominated. I felt like we could have kept them under 10. That's always a challenge, how much further can you push it? I do think Carolina is a really good football team. I think their O-Line is fantastic. I think Cam, you can say he was rusty, but that's Cam. He makes unbelievable throws and he's just a big person you've got to deal with. Their receivers are real good. And so, just from our standpoint, looking over the tape, a lot of the mistakes were things that we had complete control over and that's what I'm excited about moving forward."

CB Rashard Robinson was saying that on the fumble that he caused, Carolina Panthers RB Christian McCaffrey was going to give him a dead leg and sometimes when that happens, they're not paying attention to ball security. Do you like to see that? Obviously he could have missed that tackle because he was going for the ball so blatantly, but what's your view of that?

"I don't mind what he did because I believe Rashard felt his pursuit coming from the inside. And so, even if he did miss, he was going to get just blown up by [LB] Ray-Ray [Armstrong]. So, for him to take a shot at the ball, that's what we preach. It's all about the ball. It's everything. He had a shot. Christian, I think we got the ball out three times on him, twice they said he was down but it was close. So, we were very well aware that ball was popping out, and so it was just a matter of time for us to get it out."