

TRANSCRIPTIONS



**General Manager John Lynch & Head Coach Kyle Shanahan
Press Conference – February 6, 2020
San Francisco 49ers**

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Your quarterback has been getting a lot of heat this week. Probably should be expected, but where is your support of him? There's already been talk about situations about what you guys could do in the offseason?

Head Coach Kyle Shanahan: "Same as it was the day before the Super Bowl. There's no difference. He was on his way close to Super Bowl MVP. We all know we didn't make those plays at the end. We made those plays all year, our whole team. That's one of the reasons we were there. Whenever you don't make those plays at the end in a game like that, first and foremost the quarterback is going to get attacked and then usually the play-caller. We understand that's how it goes."

Have you had to talk to him at all or give him any sort of pep talk or he's just good about shrugging it off?

KS: "I've talked to all the guys a little bit. I talked to him a little bit on the plane on the way back, not too much. Saw him a little bit yesterday. There's not a whole lot of pep talk to say right now. We've all got to grieve the loss a little bit, which we will do the right way, and we'll be fired up to come back."

Are you guys embracing the historical challenge of trying to bounce back from the Super Bowl and just how hard that might be?

KS: "Yeah, definitely. There's a reason not a lot of teams have done it. It's not an easy thing to do. But, I also think that we've got different people than a lot of teams have. Some of the stuff we talked about yesterday as a team. I look back all the way to our first season, when we started 0-9, no team had ever finished better than 3-13 and we finished 6-10. I just look at little things like that. There are lots of stats, but I think we have a lot of stats that prove we're different people and I want those guys to keep that in their minds. We've got to deal with some of this and get it out of our system and stuff. I know it will fuel us more and we'll be pumped to come back and get after it."

What do you feel the reason is that it's difficult to bounce back after a Super Bowl loss, historically for teams?

KS: "One, just in general how hard it is to get there. That goes with it. Just because you go one year doesn't mean you're going the next year. How much teams change on a year-to-year basis, how much the injuries play into the toll, how much calls by a ref play into the toll, how much every little thing goes. It's not just a seven-game series. It's one

game. That's what's different to me in football than all other sports. That's why I always do think it's the hardest. I think people do have hard times getting over that stuff. I think sometimes you work a little bit longer into February than you're used to. A lot of guys want to relax for a long time. That's why it's important to me that we do for a few weeks. It's also to be cognizant of that, so you don't relax too long. I think we've got the right guys that we're not going to have to convince that. These guys wish we were playing this week. We're fired up to go. We can handle how hard the loss is. We want to put ourselves in that position again."

What is your evaluation of the offensive line specifically in pass protection not just in the Super Bowl, but over the course of the whole season?

KS: "I mean, it was good enough for us to go and have a chance to win the Super Bowl. We'll try to get better in every aspect. Our O-Line is one of the reasons we were second in the league in running the ball. I think we were pretty effective on third down throughout the year. I know we weren't on Sunday at the Super Bowl, but throughout the year we were. It's hard to do that stuff without a really good O-Line."

Is there any concern that you guys seemed to struggle against the really elite interior guys, Kansas City Chiefs DL Chris Jones being one of those guys against Kansas City?

KS: "No, I think everyone struggles against elite interior guys. I don't care what guard you have in this league. When you have a guard one-on-one with a player like that, it's about five at the most in this league that are like that, those guys are real tough to handle. That's why you've got to be balanced and mix stuff up. He had his plays, but we also had our plays, too."

John, I'm sure you know there's visual evidence of your knee-jerk reaction was to a call a timeout in the second quarter. Kyle explained his reasoning for that. Tell us about the knee-jerk reaction and has it evolved since?

General Manager John Lynch: "Yeah, I think it's just as if I was a player looking at the sidelines saying timeout, timeout. I was thrilled for our guys. I get excited watching these games. Not much I can do up there, but I've got these guys' backs. It's not my role to do time management. I don't focus a lot on it. I was proud of our guys getting a big stop. That was my initial reaction. [President of 49ers Enterprises and EVP of Football Operations] Paraag [Marathe] does study a lot of time management. I'm also asking him, 'Should we get the timeout?' That's all it was. It was quickly erased when they almost pinned us at the half yard line. Kyle knows that. I watch the game with emotion because I care. That's all that was."

Would you have handled that any differently in hindsight now?

KS: "No, absolutely not. I think that was one of the reasons we were up 10 points going into the fourth quarter. Absolutely wouldn't have called a timeout at that time because we were expecting to be backed up and inside the 10, just like we probably should have been at the one, if they didn't mess that play up. No, I was as confident as what we did in that situation as anything we've done all year. I mean that strongly. That's something you work at for two weeks studying that team, what they're capable of doing. You're not going to

give the ball back to them no matter what in that situation. The way he did that third-and-15 at the end of the game is how he does the two-minute drive. Felt extremely good with how we went. Not using the timeout there was a no-brainer. If we would have gotten an explosive run on the first one, then it would have been a whole different deal. But, we got a two-and-a-half-yard run. The whole goal was to not let them call a timeout there. You hurry to the line to act like you're going, but then you don't so you can ensure that [Kansas City Chiefs QB Patrick] Mahomes won't have an opportunity. And then we run a ball and then we make them use one of their timeouts. Now it's third down, at least we've made them use one of their timeouts, we've taken enough time off that if we don't get this, it's going to be harder. But, there is still a lot of pressure. You've got to move the chains there. They brought a corner blitz. [RB] Jeff [Wilson Jr.] did an awesome job. We got a big play. Ended up having an opportunity to score if we don't get the offensive PI."

You've been asked a million questions about 28-3 and every time you answer you say there's one play call you'd like back. Is there one play call you'd like back? Or is it too early?

KS: "No, I've been through it all. Probably a thousand times in the last three days. There actually isn't. I'm very excited with how that game went up to that point. I know what we didn't get done and what happened, but a lot of credit I give to Kansas City. Making that third-and-15 isn't a high-percentage deal. It has been with Mahomes this year. Throwing to the fast receiver in [Kansas City Chiefs WR] Tyreek [Hill] got behind our defense. Really thought we had the game won right there. Then you look at how you get back into it. To look at the calls and everything, you always want them to work so any time a play doesn't work, you're like, 'Yeah, I'll think of something different, so hopefully they can execute that play.' I was very happy with how the game went from a management spot, calling the game. The one thing I was contemplating that was hard on me is after we missed the post to [WR] Emmanuel [Sanders], I knew how tired our guys were. That was my hardest thing, that I really wanted to call a timeout there to give them the energy to beat the corners again because it was very hard how they were going. The reason I didn't is because if we didn't get that first down, we'd still have three. They couldn't run the clock out that way. They ended up busting that long run which made it so it didn't matter anyway. In hindsight with that, I wish I had called a timeout just so they could have recovered a little bit more and had more energy to get away from what the DBs were doing."

Do you feel that third-and-15 was the biggest play in the game? Do you feel that your defense was getting gassed a little bit when they went up-tempo?

KS: "Yeah, I mean, I think they might have a little bit after that. I wouldn't say just because of the up-tempo. We did a good job with the rotations up front. I don't think the reason we missed that play is because we were gassed. Patrick has a huge arm and they've got a lot of speed at receiver, that's a very long-developing play. It's tough not to take the bait on a 20-yard in route because you rarely think they are going to have the time to get a 60-yard throw over the top of that. That was a tough play for [CB Emmanuel] Moseley just not to take that bait because usually it can't hold up. That's why [DL DeForest] Buckner was one inch away from him, too. He held onto it as long as he could, which wasn't long, then threw it up. They've got the right two guys for that play and it was a hell of a play by them. That's why they got back into the game. That is why they were able to score there,

which made it a three-point game with six minutes to go, which isn't a time that you're all thinking about clock. You're up three points with six minutes to go. It's time to attack and move the chains. We did what we thought was right. But, we didn't convert those first downs. When we didn't, we gave him the ball back. He was hot by then, went right down and scored."

Does Emmanuel have to take that into account, the pass rush and how it's gotten there and the amount of time that Patrick has to throw?

KS: "Yeah, I mean, he's got to take that into account. But, you take everything into account. The play that they ran, the situation they run it in, what we worked on throughout the week. It's not just Emmanuel. There's 11 guys out there and they're all tied together. But, we weren't tied together right on that play."

Revisiting the end of the second quarter again. Once they didn't pin you back, you have 59 seconds and three timeouts and you had gotten a first down on all of your drives. You're fairly aggressive. I understand if you pop a run and if that works we're maybe not discussing this. Why wasn't the mindset like, hey three timeouts, 59 seconds, let's go get a touchdown?

KS: "It was, depending on how the first play went. If I would have called a screen and that would have gone for 10 yards, or called a run that went for 10 yards, would that have been considered aggressive? Those are the things that are extremely weird to me when I hear from other people. Yeah, I called a run. I don't think that's not aggressive. I've call runs sometimes on third-and-10. I think we were averaging about seven yards a carry at the time. We have a number of explosives. So, I like the run call. It also guarantees that the clock will be running after it. You look back to some of the mistakes I might have made earlier this year. You look at the end of the second quarter versus Seattle in our loss. I didn't think I was real aggressive, but we threw and [Seattle Seahawks DE Jadeveon] Clowney got a sack-fumble, they got right back in the game right there. You look at right before or in overtime at the end, they had three timeouts and we didn't want to tie. We tried to go for it. You see what happens when there's only a minute left and you get a pass tipped, we get a pass dropped. We go three-and-out. We throw a go-route to [WR] Deebo [Samuel], we just come up short on. They get it right back and [Seattle Seahawks QB] Russell [Wilson] goes down in no time and we lose the game. I mean, that one I'm very confident in what happened there. I would do that over every single time, especially when you're getting the ball in the third. That's what I felt was one of the main reasons we were up 20-10 in the fourth."

The late post to Emmanuel, you kept Kittle back in on pass protection on both third and fourth down. Was that the similar dynamic as the Rams game? Was that the same play?

KS: "Yeah, it was the same play as the Rams game. We had a formation a little bit differently, but it was the exact same play."

On a play like that, in an ideal world, would you want Kittle to be running a pass route?

KS: "I mean, we mix it up all the time in the games. You can't have receivers go back and block linebackers in protection. You don't want to bring extra O-Linemen in. Your choice isn't protection, whether you go five, six or seven man, has to involve running backs and tight ends. When you're going a take a shot like that on third down, you better protect the edges. You do it with a tight end and running back. We mix that up all the time though. It depends on what stuff you are getting, what type of play you are running. Kittle was out on a number of the third downs throughout the game and we weren't able to get to him."

You eluded to the fact that you heard some of the second-guessing. How much are you, both you guys, letting in with all this talk? One of your assistants, offensive assistant Katie Sowers, tweeted out the next day something about wow there's a lot of hatred in the world. Are you guys feeling this intense blow-back? Some of your players have talked about the loss fueling them. Do you think that's going to happen?

KS: "I don't feel it's intense blow-back, I'm not on Twitter and whatever, all that stuff is. I would never do that to myself anyways. You know, I've lost the Super Bowl before, I've been a part of a bigger lead that was lost, so I'm very well aware of what goes with that. I also am not a good liar. How you guys hear me talk is exactly how I feel. I'm really upset about the loss because it's hard to get there. I personally thought we had the best team in the NFL this year. We weren't. We've got to deal with that. I truly believe that we had that and we should have proved that and we didn't get that done. That's what's really cool about sports, it's what hurts about sport, it's what is fun about sports, it's why I like sports, it's also why everyone likes watching it, because there is a lot of emotion in there. When I do feel this way and stuff, I mean it, it makes me feel stronger because it does hurt a lot. I also know how much I can deal with it. That's the worst stuff that happens, I can't wait to try our butts off to get back there next year."

JL: "I think I would add to that, I've been on the other side of winning one. I know how good that feels. I've always heard how devastating, what a punch in the gut losing one is. We're going through that right now. That's hard. But, I think something that was important, something we talked about a lot as a team, let's not just do away with what a special season that we had. Let's not just forget that. Let's talk about the moments and memories. Something we did in our team meeting yesterday. We had our guys, just random guys, stand up and talk about their favorite moments and memories. Yeah, it's hard to get back. I believe eight teams have gotten back after losing a Super Bowl, three have won it, five have lost, so it is tough. But, we do believe we're different. There's not many teams that go from four wins to 13 and dominate an NFC in the playoffs and get there. We believe this team is different. We believe we're capable of doing that. We have to own the disappointment, but some of the things being said, I think this group is very strong in terms of who we are. I know this guy right here, in my mind, was the best coach in football this year. In the last game, we have to all own what happened. Our guys are like that, who are going to take that, put it on their shoulders. They're going to own it. We're going to move forward and we're going to be better from it."

Do you try to replicate what you had as far as the roster and the personalities, togetherness? There's going to be comings and goings, but what is your goal as

far as do you try to replicate what you had this year from the feel of the locker room?

JL: "Kyle and I, he's been coaching a season. We're always have conversations. The simple answer to that, we're trying to get better. Now, there's some realities that are different. I think an analogy for me is the first couple years, I think we brought year one 14 free agents up here. Those days aren't happening any more. We can't go to the grocery store and say I'll have that, I'll have that, I'll have that. It is more like, I'll have that, but I might have to put that back. There are tradeoffs. It's tightening up, but we knew that all along. The bright side is that we're top-five in returning starters and they're really good players. We've accounted for taking care of some of our own players. That whole process will start, Kyle and I are having our discussions internally. That's important that we really take a pragmatic approach. First of all, we get over this loss, then we start having those conversations so that we go into the Combine and the Draft ready. We'll be there. A lot of work has been done, now Kyle joins the process. And we're committed to finding a way to be better. We'd love to keep everybody. This team is special. There's a special feel to it. We hope that's the case. It's probably not likely, it just doesn't happen in this league."

Some of the financial work has already started with C/G Weston Richburg's restructure. I think LB Kwon Alexander restructured too. Do you feel that it will be possible to balance some of these things financially so that you guys can re-sign the guys you need to and still maybe make an addition this offseason?

JL: "I think someone was asking me, characterize our situation. It's not bleak. It's not like some people where you have to cut players just to be able to meet certain deals. I think more so understanding that there are players that are really good players we want to take care of, knowing it is tight. There may have to be tradeoffs along the way. But, I think we're in a good position to find a way to certainly keep the core together and even like I said our mindset to improve it."

About the defensive line, DL Dee Ford, will he have to have any sort of surgery in the offseason, getting those knees right for 2020?

JL: "Not as we know right now. We'll have those conversations. But, I think Dee is in good health right now. He was dealing with some of those tendinitis issues and such, but I think he's in a good spot right now."

As far as DL Arik Armstead, he said yesterday that he's not averse to a franchise tag. Is that something that you guys have thought about? Is that an option for keeping him for 2020?

JL: "Arik is an excellent player. He had an excellent year. I think everything is on the table. We want to find a way to keep him and make him a part of the 49ers for a long time."

It's not unlike what you had when you first got here, but kind of this condensed window after the Super Bowl, what kind of challenge does that present in terms of turning your attention to Combine, free agency right around the corner?

JL: "Just a lot of communication. I think the good thing with Kyle and I, we're always talking. His focus has had to be on the season. And so, he trusts that our group is doing a lot of the legwork so we can present it to him. We continue to have conversations. He's

already in position that he knows a lot of the issues and now we've just got to really fine-tune it and see exactly how we want to approach things. That's kind of how I would characterize it."

I took that from your first answer that QB Jimmy Garoppolo is your starter in 2020. Can you just explain your thoughts on him, what you thought of his season as a whole?

KS: "I think Jimmy is one of the main reasons we got to the Super Bowl. I think he overcame a lot. This was his first year in his career going through an entire NFL season. He still doesn't have as many starts and stuff as [Cleveland Browns QB] Baker Mayfield. I think he had a hell of a first year truly playing the position, especially coming off an ACL where you have to fight through that a ton as a quarterback, where your rhythm and everything is not there at the beginning of the year. For him to be like that and to not let the pressure get to him, and to improve as the year went, I think says a ton about Jimmy. I can't tell you how much I loved coaching the guy as a player and as a person this year."

You mentioned you heard about the pain of losing a Super Bowl, but you never felt it until now. How does it feel to you?

JL: "It stinks, you know, it really does. I think having it in your grasp and you've got such a group of men, a locker room, that just cares. They care about each other, they have each other's back. We've answered seemingly, we didn't win every game, it wasn't perfect, but we answered every call. To not finish the deal, it hurts. That will stick with us for a lifetime. But, to me it's about what you do going forward. I think the one thing I would say, too, for all the negativity, or perceived negativity, I also know that I got off the plane, I went to my daughter's basketball game, I can't tell you how many people came up and said thank you. To all the people out there that appreciate that, appreciate the effort of the team, Kyle and his staff, we are appreciative. I think a big part of the turnaround, getting to the Super Bowl, now our goal was to win the Super Bowl, we all know that, but just the feeling that has on this community, the Faithful, the fans, when we go on the road, at home, having the excitement back in here in Levi's, a lot of positive things transpired. We can't forget about that."

Can you take some inspiration from the team that just beat you? They were so close and probably felt they should have been in the Super Bowl last year. Pretty young group. Are they an example of how a team can continue to come back?

KS: "Yeah, I haven't looked at that yet. Yes, there's probably a thousand others we could say whatever direction we want to go to show that. I don't think our guys need us to prove it to them. I think they know it. I think our guys believed and knew how good we were this year. They knew how close and how easily we could have finished that. We didn't. That's stuff you've got to live with and deal with. Everybody wants to make it a little bit more than it is. It's hard to lose a Super Bowl, I promise, because it's really hard to get there. It's exhausting. It's a grind. You want to finish it off the right way. I say it all the time, one team is happy at the end of the year. I haven't been happy yet at the end of the year in my career. I plan on it happening someday. I plan on it happening every year. I also know the reality of this sport. It's funny, I've done this long enough that I know why I do it. That's why I wanted a general manager who does it for the right reasons, I want the players who

do it for the right reasons. We love football. We love it out here. I thought it was weird, I thought I was getting set up, but I couldn't believe how good this place treated me when we were 0-9, when we were 4-12. It was better than any other place I'd ever been in how people treat me. Now they treat me still very good, even actually a little better this year. It's as cool as it can be. What people don't realize, I think, because not everyone is in our situation is that when I have 200 texts, which would be more if I didn't always change my number, but if I had 200 texts after an NFC Championship game, everyone telling you how good you are and stuff, we felt that way throughout the season before it started. When you have 200 people texting you after Super Bowl, 'How you doing? Are you okay? We still believe in you.' I know there's a lot of people saying I'm not that good out there. What I can say to you guys is, it doesn't change how we feel inside when people tell us how good you are. You have to be even that strong, it doesn't change how you are inside when people tell you how bad you are. It doesn't matter. We're playing the sport. Everyone else can evaluate it all you want. I am proud as can be of how our team handled everything, how I did, how John did, how everyone did. Now we can deal with whatever because we're proud of how we handled it. If I wasn't proud of that, then the stuff would be very hard on me. That's what's cool when you get in these moments and you can feel all this, it makes you stronger. That is a cool feeling. Not to mention how hard grieving the loss of a Super Bowl is. We'll start that process."