

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

TRANSCRIPTIONS



Head Coach Kyle Shanahan
Press Conference – December 6, 2017
San Francisco 49ers
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In terms of red zone, you talked earlier in the season about not having a lot of big-bodied receivers. Is that part of it, that there just aren't a lot of big targets for your quarterbacks there?

“Yeah, I mean I wouldn't say that's all of it, but when things get tighter and a lot of teams just depend on throwing the ball up to some big guys, which gets you a few cheap touchdowns throughout the year. If you make a living doing just that you're eventually not going to be good either because people can stop big guys who just post up, because they struggle sometimes to get open. Having lots of ways to attack people is the best way to be successful there. If you have a threat to run the ball, you get lots of good looks to throw the ball. If you're not good at running the ball and you have to throw, they're going to probably rush three and it's very hard for five people to get open versus eight when sitting in a small area. It's about being balanced and able to do a little bit of everything, having some diversity in your type of skill players, so you can run different types of plays.”

In terms of WR Trent Taylor playing the slot, ever since when you guys drafted him, you just liked the way he was able to get free. Is his game Sunday exactly what you want out of that position?

“Yes, definitely. That's what you look forward to, especially on third down when guys who can separate versus man-to-man and when they catch it they turn it up the field and move the chains. It's been an important role throughout the league, something that we've always had on our team. You always have your fast-big guys usually. Not always big, but you can win with size or speed on the outside. On the inside, I think you have to win with quickness, whether it's a slot receiver, whether it's a tight end, whether it's a running back. Those are usually the three areas you get those types of routes from.”

Was there any point where you were preparing to play without him on Sunday?

“No. Not at all.”

Trent, LB Reuben Foster and TE George Kittle all played and all did well on Sunday. Have the rookies this year exceeded your expectations?

“I wouldn't say they exceeded it. We had high expectations for them. We knew coming in that they were going to have to play a factor going into this year, especially when we had some injuries. I think we put a lot of pressure on them early in the year, which I had

to kind of temper myself with. We went in and guys like George, expect him to come in early and start for us in the beginning of the year. Same with Trent. As a coach, you want them to play great right away, but then you've also got to realize that you put them in some roles that they weren't fully ready for. And what's been cool about all those guys is sometimes when you put someone in a role they aren't 100-percent ready for, they get a little bit overwhelmed and they take a few steps back. I feel like all those guys have mentally been the right way and they've gotten better as the year's gone. All of them have been battling injuries. For rookies, when you battle injuries, how long the year lasts, they usually don't last all year. It's just too long and they're not used to it. Those guys have done a good job taking care of their bodies and coming back."

When you're watching QB Jimmy Garoppolo in the game, does it help putting the game plan together now, what worked for him, what didn't, what he was good at, how does that affect--?

"Yeah, it makes it easier each week. I get a feel for him, how he reacts throughout a game. What he's comfortable with. He gets an idea for how I call plays. How we communicate on the sidelines about things. How we adjust to things once we see them. You get an idea of stuff that he can struggle with or that puts more stress on him and stuff that doesn't. You can talk about that stuff a lot, but you don't truly know until you go into a game. He doesn't know the process of how we do it. He knows one thing and we're waiting to see how it goes together. I thought it was a good first start. It's more comfortable here just talking with him on Monday and Tuesday, the expectations of the game. I think it will help him practice better this week, having a little bit more idea of what normally was the unknown going into Sunday."

Can you say how much of the playbook he knows now?

"No, he knows what we put in this week and that's what it comes down to now. Now that he's our starter, we put in stuff that he knows. Yeah, we introduced him to stuff today that will be the first time. He just walks through it, where he's just trying to feel it out. He'll rep it today. Probably need another rep of it on Thursday, possibly on Friday. But, also tomorrow you put in a number of third down plays, short-yardage goal line. Friday we put in red zone. So, you keep adding stuff each day until you have a whole game plan. And then by Saturday night you get together, you kind of soak it all in. I have an idea of what I think he's comfortable with and does well and he has an idea too. Then we discuss it. Things that he's not comfortable with or I'm not comfortable with them, we usually take out. We know going into that game on Sunday that everything in he can do."

You mentioned after the game that you felt like your guys caught the ball better than they have all year. Is there something about the way he throws, does he throw a more catchable ball? Is it just accuracy, anything that you've seen there?

"I think he threw some accurate balls. The most catchable balls are guys who lob it and don't have the arm strength. Guys can catch my ball. I throw it real soft and it would get them killed and lit up over the middle. Jimmy has some zip on it. So, that's not by any means easy to catch. But, he can take some off too. But, yeah hitting guys in stride

helps a lot. I also think guys getting open makes it easier to catch and I thought our guys did a good job getting open.”

It’s just a real small sample size and you probably have to temper your expectations, but does he bring just a certain intangible? It appears that he does when he’s on the field.

“I think when a quarterback goes out there and has some success, I think it’s pretty obvious for everyone to see his arm talent, just how quick he can get rid of it, the quick twitch he has in his arm and in his legs, the zip he can put on a ball. I think everyone sees that and when you go out there and you make some of the throws that he did, people get very excited. I think our players and everything, they know he’s new to all this. They know he’s behind all the other guys. But, to come in there in that situation and to make some of the plays that he did, when he is in that situation, definitely excites everybody. I think everyone knows the potential and the possibilities. It’s not that you have to temper, you just have to be realistic. It was one game. He did some really good things in that game and there’s a lot of stuff that we can get better at too from that game. We’ve got four more left and it’ll be fun to grade all of these. I think some hopefully will be better. Some will be worse. But, the main thing is not judging that outcome as a positive or a negative. I see it all as positives. It’s a way to get better and a way to really help lead us into next year.”

Speaking of the excitement, the fan base is very excited and people are tossing around former 49ers QB Joe Montana comparisons and stuff. Is there any part of you that wants to say, ‘Woah, woah, woah, this is one game. Let’s calm down.’ Or do you like that excitement that all of a sudden there’s this buzz around the team?

“I love that excitement and I think it’s deserving in terms of you should be excited that we have a talented guy. But, you also want to be fair to Jimmy too. You said the words, Joe Montana and that was his third NFL game really playing. That’s the goal and we’re excited about him and that’s the goal. Hopefully someday we can get to there, but let’s take it one game at a time.”

What specific areas did he exceed your expectations?

“Just some of the throws he made. I think it’s tough when you’re just not on autopilot and exactly know where everyone is all the time. He definitely does when he’s in the meeting room and he can draw it up and we can sit and relax. When you go fast and things, sometimes that gets tough, coming out of a huddle when the play clock is down. To me, sometimes even when he was confused and wasn’t exactly sure where to go with the ball, he still progressed and moved pretty fast and made some pretty good throws. Especially, there were a couple in that game where we missed a protection and there was someone in his face and he was able to let it rip. Especially, one to Trent over the middle on third down. He stays composed, doesn’t get too high or too low. Communicates well with the guys. He’s handled himself well since he’s been here throughout the week and going into a game you don’t know because you know it’s going to be tough for him and even when there were tough times he never lost his composure. He was always the same guy since he’s been here.”

You're still going week-to-week on your game captains. Why is that?

"I was going to decide during the Bye Week. That was my original plan. And, I did it week-to-week and I've enjoyed doing it that way. I didn't think by the Bye Week that there was the obvious exact guys you should pick on all three phases. It's been neat, I think, for the players to name one each week. We do it based off of how they're practicing and how they played the week before. I think it's fun in team meetings on Saturday nights to tell them who the captains are going to be. I expect us to have some captains next year, designated ones. I don't know whether it will start the season that way or we'll do it halfway through, but we've changed a lot throughout this year. A lot of guys that are on our team now weren't on our team at the beginning of the year. We've lost a lot of guys that were here and they left, and we've had a lot of injuries throughout the year too. We go into that Bye Week or the week before is when we actually had to make it official for the captains. A lot of guys who would've been possibilities weren't playing at the time either. So, it just didn't make much sense to me. If it doesn't make much sense then I just don't do it."

Do players have some input into who is the captain each week?

"No they don't. When we do it next year, which we planned on doing this year, we were going to wait until halfway and we were going to let the players vote on who they thought earned it and who they wanted it to be. We were going to have them do three and then we were going to pick three each week. But, by the time it got to where the players would've voted, there were so many guys that I think they could've voted for who weren't playing. Some guys who had gone on IR and things like that, that it was just we were kind of doing it just to do it. I don't like to do anything just to do it. It just didn't make sense to me at the time. So, we've kept it doing it the same way we've been doing it all year."

Obviously you're pretty far removed from your time in Houston now. Looking back, what are some things you took away from that experience that maybe helped you get to where you are now?

"I loved my time in Houston. I went to school in Austin so I've always loved the state of Texas. Going down to Houston, lots of good people. Very down to earth people. Great food out there. I miss the Tex-Mex the most, and the queso. [Houston Texans general manager] Rick [Smith] was there when I was there. [Houston Texans Owner] Mr. [Robert] McNair. Not many people on the team are left over, just looking at the roster. There might be more, but I want to say [LB Brian] Cushing is one of the only ones left. I know [Seattle Seahawks OL] Duane [Brown] was there. That was my first time as a position coach, got to be a receiver coach there and then a quarterback coach, and my first two years as a coordinator. Back then I didn't have as many scars. Everything went pretty good. In our two years as a coordinator it went real well. Had a lot of good memories from there. I've left and gone to a bunch of different places. Had to do different things. Houston's a good city, a good football town. It's a good organization."

From the success you say you enjoyed as a coordinator right away, is that something that's helpful when you do go on to enjoy success elsewhere, like you did in Atlanta in particular?

"Yeah. You're going to do what works. In my first couple years in Houston what we did worked and it worked with the people we had. It worked with [Atlanta Falcons QB] Matt Schaub and [former NFL WR] Andre Johnson, [former NFL TE] Owen Daniels, [former NFL WR] Kevin Walter. That's all I knew so I thought it would work everywhere. I go to Washington, didn't work the same way. You're forced as a coach to adjust. It's frustrating at first because you want to do what seemed easy at the time but it didn't work. You've got to adjust to your players. I think I had to do that year-in and year-out at Washington. Which forced me to just evolve. We had some pretty good years in Washington offensively. Then when I went to Cleveland I had to adjust and it was different. When I went to Atlanta I had to adjust and it was different. You have a foundation of what you believe in, but just the path of being fortunate enough to be a coordinator for those nine years and to go to four different places and do it. You don't feel it at the time, but looking back on it, it makes you a lot better because you realize there's always ways you want to do things but it doesn't always work that way. If you're forced to adjust I think it makes you a better coach in the long run."

You've been asked about injuries, but are there any new injuries that came up after Sunday's game and how do you think OL Trent Brown and DB Adrian Colbert came out of that game?

"I think they came out well. I know Trent is still going to be limited this week. We'll see how that goes throughout the week. Adrian is definitely better this week than he was last week. It's healed a week longer so I expect him to be much better. Then the other guys, we just had a sickness with Trent, [CB] K'Waun [Williams] went out for a little bit but he should be fine today. I think it was really our best week injury-wise that I could remember this year."

Can you speak to the dynamic, the defense in stretches has played very well this year and you have guys making plays. The DL Cassius Marshes of the world, the DL Leger Douzables that weren't even here during training camp. What's the dynamic for a guy like that? Is it kind of a second lease on life when they get a chance to come in? They're actually making plays and look like guys you might be interested in in the future because of the way they're playing.

"Yeah, definitely. We went through a stretch on defense where we lost a lot of guys. When that happens, especially after a trade deadline and stuff, there's not a ton of options. So you've got a few guys on practice squad and then you've got to go to the guys that we say are in the street. That just means they're not in a building. You work out a bunch of guys and to bring in guys, like for Marsh to become available from New England, Douz had been out there, we had him earlier in our camp. You never know when you have a guy in camp then you don't bring him back. Just like [WR Louis] Murphy until Week 12 or 10 or whatever it is, they all tell you they've been working out and they're in shape but you never really know. Credit to those guys, they have been. So they came in, they were in shape, and they were able to help us. When those guys aren't like that, they tell you and then they come in and that first practice they pull a

hamstring and they hurt you twice as bad after that. It's been a credit to those guys, especially like Douz and Murph who were here. We did like them, it was hard to let them go, but just number-wise, we told them there would be a good chance they came back. A lot of people would give up on that if it doesn't happen in the first month, but those guys stayed strong, acted like pros and they've been able to help us get through some of these stretches that would've been real tough without them."