

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

TRANSCRIPTIONS



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San Francisco 49ers
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Do you feel refreshed?

“I do. That Thursday Night game is always, depending on where you get it in the season, if you get it late you’re kind of going in banged up. But, if you get it early enough it’s kind of like having an extra bye week. Especially this early on. We’ve had some injuries so we get some guys healthy and for us to kind of hit a reset button and get ready to go.”

Head coach Kyle Shanahan just mentioned you guys were discussing what you want to do as a team on Sunday. What have those discussions been like? What’s your opinion of it and what have you had to contribute to it?

“We have a leadership counsel. We sat down and talked, everybody together, with Kyle and [General Manager] John [Lynch]. We’re still deciding what it’s going to be. For me, because I don’t want to kneel for the national anthem, it doesn’t mean that I can’t support my teammate and brother that feels like he wants to. Whatever we do, we’re going to do as a team. I think that’s the great thing about America, everybody is entitled to their own opinion. Entitled to do what they want to do. I think the one problem is, a lot of people if you have a different opinion you dislike them or you hate them because they don’t see things the same way that you do. I’ve always said this. I did an interview during training camp on the radio. If everybody got to experience playing and being in an NFL locker room for a year I think our country would be so much better. You get to experience people from all different parts of the country, intercity, country, maybe grew up rich, maybe grew up dirt poor. I’ve played with guys that are Atheist, Christian, Muslim, Hispanic, black, whatever. The one thing is you get to know these people and enjoy them for who they are. Trust me, I don’t always see eye to eye with their views or their opinions, but you come together towards a common goal and you learn to respect and love them as your brother. I think if people were just more willing to be accepting to other people’s opinions, you don’t have to agree with them, you don’t always have to go along with it, but it doesn’t mean you have to hate them, that you have to be so divided. Having two kids at this time the way the world is going, it’s scary. I think it’s becoming more and more divided. For us, if we can show some kind of unity as a team, I may not do the same thing that they do as far as taking a knee, but I can support them. That’s their right to do that. That’s their opinion. I think if we can show more unity instead of being divided I think that’s what the world needs now more than ever. So, I think for me, whatever we decide to do we’re going to do as a group, as an entire team. Not force

someone to do something they don't want to do, but also support people who want to do something that they may want to do."

Did you watch much ball on Sunday?

"I tried to actually just spend time with my wife and kids. So, in and out here and there. Threw on the NFL Redzone for a few minutes. Other than that, you don't get a lot of family time during the NFL season. So, I tried to use it the best I could."

Do you think what's happening right now, your decision, and all the time and energy you're spending to decide what you're going to do, do you think that's a distraction?

"Well, I'd like to spend it on football. But, I think it's an important thing that's ongoing, especially when it gets called out by the President. I think you have to address it. You have to go in with some sort of plan. I think you saw that around the league. Teams went out with some sort of plan. Whether it was stay in the locker room, what Dallas did the other night, it's unfortunate that we want to focus on football you have to take time away to do it. But, I think it's needed. You have to sit down and figure out and have a discussion on the table and say, 'Well how do you see it and what do you want to do?' Then that way, like I said, we can go out and show a united front as our team."

I keep thinking about as far as what you said about the experience in the NFL locker room and how important it is. Do you think it's the developed skill of just being able to listen and learn from people?

"Yeah, I think the one thing that a football team has that the whole country doesn't have is we have a common goal. We're always working towards something together. You're going through things together. Obviously, that'll never happen with the entire population. But, I think the one thing is you just learn acceptance and you learn that even though someone may be totally different than you, you can find to become best friends with them. Really if you just sit and listen to them and talk to them and see what they've gone through and try to put yourself in someone else's shoes. I think more now than ever, maybe because I'm older now I recognize it more. But, I think you either are on one side or the other and it seems like if you're in the middle you're kind of on your own. It's like you have to pick a side. If people were more willing to accept other people and their differences, I think that's the greatest thing about this country. We've got people from all over the place, all over the world. That's why we are the greatest country in the world. You just have to go out and be able to be willing to accept those people for who they are."

Have you talked to S Eric Reid since you've been here about some of these issues that he's had through protesting and what things have you learned from him?

"I think more so in a group setting. I've never really talked to him one-on-one. It came out the other day when we were trying to decide what we wanted to do. I think the one thing that he emphasized to us is he's not doing it in any disrespect to the flag, to the military. It's for those people who don't have a voice to stand up and say something. It's funny because being a professional athlete I think a lot of people look at us as quote-

unquote 'celebrities.' I've never really felt that way about myself, but in the grand scheme of things you have a platform to stand up and say something and people will listen. What Eric has done is taken his celebrity or whatever you might call it and try to put it to good. It's been obviously analyzed to the nth degree. What he emphasized to us as the leadership council was it means no disrespect to the flag, it means no disrespect to the military, the people who have fought to be able to give him that right. It's for him trying to do something for the people that don't have as big of a voice as he does."

You can maybe make the argument that what he's doing is kind of patriotic. Because he's just trying to make things better. In terms of equality and justice.

"Yeah. Like I said, when he conveyed it to us it's no disrespect to the flag, the anthem, the military. Like you said, I think that's the thing, he's trying to make things better. It's not to try to be divisive. He's trying to bring people together. What we end up doing when we finalize it on Sunday, hopefully that conveys that message more than just him taking a knee with a few guys around him. If we can all show that we support each other even though we have differences and different beliefs, hopefully that shows a united front as opposed to being divided."

When you reference the football locker room, is there an example in your life in high school, maybe even earlier that opened your eyes to a different group that you might not have?

"I went to an all-white basically Catholic boys school in Cleveland, Ohio. Going to Michigan State was kind of my first. Even then, you go to these football camps and you get to meet these other players who maybe are from inner-city Detroit. My first roommate at Michigan State was a black kid from inner-city Detroit and we got along great. For me, it was such a cool experience because it was so different. You get to meet so many different people. And then you move on and you keep meeting other different people. I've played with guys from Germany, from the backwoods of Alabama, the inner-city of Detroit. You just get to meet so many different people. When you're actually, I don't want to say forced, but you get to spend time with people more than five minutes when you're walking by them on the street. You get to understand that everybody has a different walk in life. Everyone has different views, different opinions, different religion, race, whatever it might be. But, we're all human beings. If you just give people the time of day to figure out who they are and what they are, and like I said, it's easy for us because we go out there and get our butts kicked together by [head strength & conditioning coach] Ray Wright in the offseason and it just brings people closer together. I think in general you have to be able to be accepting of people. It's okay that someone might not see something the same way you do. But, that doesn't mean you have to dislike them or hate them. Just appreciate them for who they are and move on with your life. I think that's the one thing, I think people get consumed so much with what other people are doing instead of just worrying about their own life. That's another thing about football is you always try to worry about what you can control. I'm not going to worry about controlling somebody else's beliefs or opinions. It's not up to me to do. It just adds stress, really. When it comes to anything I just try to control what I can control and live my life that way."

Looking ahead to Sunday, you guys had a lot more success against the Los Angeles Rams on Thursday but it still took a while to get things going. How do you get going on the road to avoid playing catch-up?

“You just want to go out there and execute plays. Whether it’s a run play, pass play. Get a rhythm. Get that first, first down and get things going. Just like any week in the NFL, it’s always a challenge. Even watching the film from the Dallas game the other night, the score maybe wasn’t what it turned out to be. [Dallas Cowboys QB] Dak [Prescott] made two great plays getting out of the pocket and throwing the ball deep. That’s basically 14 points right there. It’s going to be a challenge, especially on the road. It always is. You’ve just got to go out and keep executing. Sometimes it goes great and you go right down on the field and score. Sometimes you’ve got to grind it out a little bit, get a feel for what they’re doing and go and attack what they’re doing.”

I know executing is the name of the game, but is there anything you can do with the script in particular to somehow get an early rhythm?

“You always try to go in and visualize ‘Okay on this play if we get this coverage you’re going to go here.’ You always try to do that. Then it’s just about going out and maybe you’ve got a different coverage than you didn’t expect or different run look or whatever it is and you have to be able to adjust and make those adjustments really as the game’s going on.”

The first two games as you said hadn’t gone great. A lot of people commented in the aftermath ‘That guys showed a lot of guts and poise and moxie’ or whatever the case is. Did you feel that? Are you proud of the way--?

“I’m always going to play that way. I’m always going to play as hard as I can until the game’s over. You talk about not worrying what you can’t control, I can’t control the previous play. I can only control what I’m doing on that play. That’s the one thing is if you let it kind of linger and keep going it could affect the way you play. I think for me the biggest thing was obviously that first play didn’t go the way I wanted it to, but you come over, shake it off and go to the next play. Figure out what the plan is. Because you know you’re getting the ball right back where you put them in that position. Figure out what you’re going to do on the next drive. I think for me that’s the one thing, you handle the adversity and move on to the next play. Really that’s all you can do. The more you get angry, the more you get upset, it’s going to affect the way you play.”

Arizona Cardinals head coach Bruce Arians has a reputation for being very blunt with his players and media. Kyle kind of seems like he’s following along that same path. You’ve been around Kyle for a long time. Do you appreciate a coach who is kind of straight forward and honest with you?

“Yeah, for sure. You never want someone to sugarcoat anything with you. You want directly from the source exactly what he’s thinking. That’s been Kyle since the day I’ve known him. He can’t be a sugarcoat-type of guy. He’s going to give it to you exactly how he sees it, right then and there. For me, as a player, you always want that. You don’t want to be thinking, ‘Well is he just trying to be nice about this?’ No. Kyle is going to be very blunt, right to the point and say, ‘Hey, you messed up on this.’ Or even, ‘Hey great

job on this, now when you get this play next time,' It's all about getting right to it and not beating around the bush. I think as a player, ultimately that's what you want. Sometimes the guy who sugarcoats it might make you feel a little bit better about things, but really it's just hiding what you need to get done anyways."

Has there ever been a moment where you're like, 'Boy he was a little too honest here,' with him?

"There's been plenty of moments. He's got the ability to reign it back in and get right to the next play. Kind of what we talked about before. Fix what you can and just move on to the next one."

What did he say after the first play the other night?

"He just said, 'Hey don't worry man, just keep letting it rip. Don't worry, it is what it is.' I remember I joked when they were reviewing the one play. I went up to [Los Angeles Rams CB] Nickell [Robey-Coleman] and said, 'Hey man good guess.' You know what I mean? It's the first play of the game. We've got our fastest guy going in motion and he didn't move. So, good play by him. The only thing I could've done is just throw it in the stands. So, he made a good play and you just move on to the next one. That's really all you can do."

You seemed to develop a quick rapport with WR Trent Taylor back in the summer. What is it about him that makes him a sort of trustworthy receiver?

"He's got a unique skillset. You saw it on his touchdown. The way he was able to go out, break off a cut and come back in so quickly. If you got back and watch that play you see how fast he can get in and out of cuts. That's what you look for in a guy who's trying to get separation. Especially in man coverage. He's done a lot of hard work. The one thing about guys like that is they can kind of get a little crazy with cuts and that. He's kind of refined it and made it more smooth and more trustworthy. It's paid off for him, he made a few big plays for us the other night."