

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

TRANSCRIPTIONS



Head Coach Kyle Shanahan
Press Conference – August 25, 2017
San Francisco 49ers
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What went into the decision to release LB Ahmad Brooks right now?

“Doing it right now is more just in the best interest for Ahmad. It’s a real tough decision. [General Manager] John [Lynch] and I had gone back and forth with it the last few days. Once we really came to the conclusion he wasn’t going to be a part of our final 53, we weren’t going to keep him around just to let him know nine days from now. So, we know there’s a lot of teams that will be interested in him. So, we gave him that opportunity to go out and find them.”

What does this say about LB Eli Harold and how that SAM linebacker position is shaping up behind Eli?

“Eli’s our starter right now at SAM linebacker. I feel like we do have some other depth there too. A number of guys have done a good job. Guys like [LB] Dekoda [Watson]. We have some versatility there where not all the guys that are listed there. We also have some guys who have the ability to play there who aren’t listed there. So, I feel good about our depth at SAM and the guys that stepped up and done a good job.”

Who are those guys?

“There’s a number of guys. I can’t really say them all.”

LB Aaron Lynch? Is he one of them?

“Yeah. All guys, whether it’s the SAM-backer or a LEO position, we prefer guys at certain ones, but pretty much all of them have the ability to do both.”

You prepared to play against Eli last year. How much of a different player is he from that point to now?

“I definitely know him better, that’s for sure. I’ve noticed him more in practice every day, seen him all the time. He was in and out. He wasn’t there all the time last year just going against him. I notice him more now though. He’s a physical player who can set the edge. I think he’s got a lot more in him. I think he can continue to improve. But, I love the way he fights. I love the way he competes every day. He’s a guy, to me, who’s trying to be his best every day. I think there’s a lot more to come. Usually guys who have that type of mentality, they usually get better, not worse.”

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We've seen Ahmad sort of as bookends with LB Elvis Dumervil in your nickel alignments. Who's the preferred guy now in that spot?

"There isn't really a designated preferred guy. Ahmad never exactly was either. We know he has been one of our top rushers. I think we've got a number of guys who can do that. We've got a number of guys who can play outside and inside also. So, I think when you look at our entire D-Line, especially when you get into nickel situations where run is not as big of a deal, there's times where all four of the guys out there could play outside or inside. So, it'll be hard to ever give you guys a direct answer with that because there isn't one. I plan on having strength in numbers and rotating those guys. Who are they going against? What's the matchups? What type of games are we trying to do? Where's the center going? Things like that."

It looked like LB Pita Taumoepeu had been moved over a little bit more often to that SAM spot over recent weeks. How has he done in that role versus the LEO?

"He's done a solid job. He plays hard. He's still trying to learn both. I forget what it was a couple weeks ago, but we had some injuries so we had to try him out there. He's done a solid job at both spots."

Has the switch from a 3-4 last year to a 4-3 this year helped Eli at all?

"He plays the same position. So, any time, whether you call it a 4-3 or a 3-4, when there's a backer on the ball 98-percent of the time, that's a 3-4 to me. I know we call ours a 4-3, but from an offensive standpoint it's a 3-4. So, it just depends how you look at it. Eli is a backer on the ball in our 4-3 scheme. Just like he was a backer on the ball in a 3-4 scheme. It more depends on what techniques you want to play. That all changes how you do your fronts. But, our fronts are very similar. I think the bigger change in what they called a 3-4 last year and what we call a 4-3 this year was more the techniques and how you play runs. Whether you're two-gapping or one-gapping. Things like that inside."

Have you been able to talk to Ahmad and was he understanding of the decision?

"Yeah, I talked to Ahmad this morning. Ahmad was great. To tell you the truth it was something that was real hard for me to do. You know, I never knew Ahmad until I got here. I've had a lot of respect for him over his career. He's been great for me since I've gotten here. I've really enjoyed him as a person. When you have a guy who has meant to this organization, just looking it up, to be third in sacks all-time for the San Francisco 49ers is a pretty big deal. I think there's a pretty good history here and to be third all-time, it shows what type of career Ahmad has had here. I know some of the defenses he's been on. Going against, he's played on some real good defenses. So, I did think it was a bigger deal than usual. Ahmad handled it like a pro. He was great talking to him and I wish him nothing but the best."

You mentioned some options you had, but Ahmad was a guy, one of a few guys sack-wise that had actually done it in the NFL. How much did his age factor into it given where you are with this team or was it just a matter of how he was performing during training camp?

“Ahmad can still do things. I think everyone knows that. He’s going to help somebody this year. It really comes down to the final 53. I’m starting to get a better feel for what that is now. It’s taken me some time. It’s taken John and I some time because we’ve got to know what our group is like. It’s really been nothing against Ahmad. It’s, how are we going to get 53 guys on this team, the right type of 53 guys. You think of guys that might not be as good in Week 1 but you think they’ll be ready in Week 3. What gives you the best chance to win in Week 1 and Week 8 and Week 16? You’ve got to play all that into account. It’s rarely as simple as saying it’s the starter versus the backup, versus the third string guy. It has to do with the overall 53. When you start to position stuff on guys you want to make the roster and you don’t want to lose guys to other teams if you put them on practice squad or things like that. All that goes into account. So, when we start to look at the 53 and see some of the guys we’d have to lose by keeping people, that ends up making you lead to that type of decision.”

Why is Eli a good fit in the one-gap scheme?

“He’s a good fit in a one-gap scheme or a two-gap scheme. Anytime you have a 3-4 backer that stands up there, it’s about setting the edge to keep everything inside. Regardless of what scheme. When there’s a backer on the ball, it’s a backer who does it. When the backer is the other way and it’s a D-Lineman playing in the C-gap, now you hope it’s an eight-man front and now it’s your strong safety doing it. Whoever has the force on the player, guys who have to set the edge and not allow the ball to get outside. That is Eli’s strength. He’s very physical on tight ends. When he’s on the edge and he has contain or has the force, it’s very hard to stretch him and get outside of him.”

How long will you let the starters go on Sunday?

“We’ll play it out as the game goes. My goal is to at least keep them in the first half. That’s what I’d hope for. Then I’ll get a feel at halftime what we want to do in the third quarter.”

Have you decided who the second quarterback into the game will be?

“Yeah, [QB] C.J. [Beathard] is coming in second.”

Have you decided if DB Jimmie Ward will play?

“Yeah, he’s not going to play.”

Early returns on S Eric Reid and the shift on his position is a pretty good return so far. What do you think makes him suited to that more in the box position?

“I think it’s obvious, his size. He’s a big guy. He’s very smart. He’s a good tackler. When you play an eight-man front, almost every play is going to be designed to go to a certain person. If a team doesn’t block the backside end, if you play your gap sound that ball is probably going to go to the backside D-End. When you man-block the backside, that’s probably going to go to a safety filling up there in the gaps. So, you need guys who are stout enough to meet them at the line of scrimmage, that don’t have to just shoot their guns to go do it so then they get beat on all play actions. So, he’s got the ability to be very good in an eight-man front and he has over his career. What’s good about Eric is

when you do have that ability to be good in the run, he also has some speed and some athletic ability to cover some people too which makes him a good player.”

What have you guys done this week with the offensive line as far as OL Erik Magnuson working him in with the ones a little bit and C Tim Barnes as well? What’s the thinking there?

“There really wasn’t any. I know [vice president of communications] Bob [Lange] asked me about that yesterday. When we do a carded period, there’s 10 plays and it’s really the ones for all of them. And that’s what you say because that’s how it is once you get to the season. There aren’t many twos and threes during the season when you only have a 53-man roster. We’re trying to treat this week normal, so you’ve got 10 plays in a period. The ones go out there and when the ones won’t stay for 10 plays in a row, but it’s not like we yell, ‘twos,’ and the twos go up. It’s, ‘Hey, our right guard, he’s out. We need a new right guard in for a play. Our starting right guard got this rep yesterday, let’s get our backup a rep today.’ Never, just because you see guys in a picture that might be in and there’s ones next to him, that doesn’t mean he’s going with the ones. It means whoever was there just got a break that play. There’s plenty of times you might, if you looked at practice this week, you’d see the starting O-Line in there and [QB] C.J. [Beathard] would be at quarterback, because we don’t want [QB] Brian [Hoyer] to go 10 plays in a row and he took a run play off or something like that. There’s plenty of times you’ll see maybe the last receiver on our roster in there with 10 starters, but it’s because it’s a backside route that really doesn’t pertain and [WR] Marquise [Goodwin] has taken five reps in a row and he doesn’t need to run a go route that he’s not getting the ball on.”

So, the offensive starting line will remain the same?

“Yes, remain the same. Basically I’ve heard, Bob asked me about that because of a picture you guys saw, but I promise that doesn’t mean anything.”

Who are your top gunners--?

“Long story short.”

Or short story long?

“Yeah, exactly.”

Who are your top gunners on special teams right now?

“We’re still trying to find out. [WR Aaron] Burbridge has done a good job in this league, the times he’s done it. He’s been out, so he’s been the guy who has been our lead dog at that and he’s trying to recover from his injury, so we’re trying to see who steps up. We’ve had two games to see it. I do believe gunner is something that you can see in practice how guys move and stuff and who has the ability to be good, but you really don’t know until games until you see how people tackle and everything and that’s something we’re going to need two more games to definitely evaluate.”

Do you have any idea on how long Burbridge will be out?

“I don’t.”

Has C.J. won the competition to be the number two quarterback?

“No, he hasn’t.”

Why do you want to see him come in second again, for the second game in a row?

“[QB Matt] Barkley did the first, C.J. did the second. I wanted to get C.J. out there earlier. I’ve seen Barkley play in the NFL before. I’d like to see C.J. do it a little bit more.”

The last couple of years there’s been so many penalties on kicks and punts league wide. Do you have any sort of reason why or what your take on maybe why those plays have been so flagged?

“League-wide or are you saying in preseason?”

It seems like league-wide, it’s a common--?

“I’m sorry, can you start your question again. I didn’t hear the beginning of it. My bad.”

The last couple of years, it seems like there’s an epidemic of penalties on special teams plays. Do you have any take as to maybe why those seem to be increasing?

“Yeah, it doesn’t mean I’m right, but just my guess would be when you kick a ball a long way and there’s a long way to go for people running and stuff it’s very hard to block people in space and do things like that. Sometimes it’s hard to stick and block a guy over a 40-yard play without holding him a little bit or getting close to a clip. There’s so much moving parts in special teams, that would make sense to me that there’s the most penalties there. Even more so in the preseason because of the different guys you have doing it. But, those plays are long developing. Just like when you see a guy get holding on an offensive play on the outside, they’re thinking it’s going on the inside and then the back stops and reverses the field and then all of a sudden someone gets a holding call on it because they didn’t expect it to go in there. And special teams I feel like is like that every play.”

How are you at yelling at officials? Is it something you’ve had practice with?

“I’m pretty good at it. I’ve been a little distracted the first two games, so I’ve been off my game on it, but it’s not something that you want to do. Those guys are trying just as hard as we are. I think I was worse at that when I was younger. Now that I’m older, I’ve gotten better at realizing that they’re trying just as hard as we are and it doesn’t help just to yell at them. You’ve got to talk to them and see if you both can learn from something that possibly could have been a mistake.”