

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

TRANSCRIPTIONS



CEO Jed York
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San Francisco 49ers
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What was the take away from the meeting that the owners had with the players?

“I think the biggest takeaway is owners are listening to the players in what their needs are, what their concerns are, personally and in their communities. I think there’s the beginning of a dialog, the beginning of a better partnership of how can we do things together in the community to make our players and their families’ communities a better place? That’s the big takeaway to me, and knowing that the NFL is going to put its full weight behind sort of a multipronged approach of helping with grassroots efforts, helping with getting the right message across, helping with legislative reform. Whether that’s at the local level, the state level, the federal level, which we’ve already started by endorsing a federal bill, and I think you’re going to see that happen more and more. But, this has to be a partnership where it can’t be just the owners using the League platform or a checkbook to say, ‘Okay, we’re going to do this and players aren’t going to show up.’ And, it can’t be just players saying, ‘Well, we’re going to go do something in the community.’ It has to be together and the more that we work together the better we can make our country.”

Were some owners kind of, did you enlighten some that may not have been aware of what the issues were and now they’re more on board with it or are there still a couple hardliners that are digging in?

“I think that’s giving me way too much credit, saying I enlightened somebody. I think I’m still in the process of learning more and more about these issues. I think it starts with, obviously last season we were the first team to have folks demonstrate and have something on their mind, but you sit down and you listen to them and I think the more that you have owners and players together, not just me meeting with 49ers players, but several owners meeting with players from different teams and it’s not about collective bargaining issues, it’s not about workplace environment, it’s really understanding where different people come from and knowing that a lot of players, it may not be the exact same issue, but there are things that rely around social inequalities that they’ve seen and experienced that they can share those experiences with owners. You’re seeing people that might not understand that firsthand. They’re getting a much better perspective and I would give a ton of credit to the players that came on their off day, went to New York, spent time with a group of owners, a group from the NFL, to really try to explain the issues and try to get their message to be more clear.”

Obviously, there's one team that said that they would bench players if they kneeled for the Anthem and that team is coming in here this weekend. Did you get a chance to talk to Dallas Cowboys owner/president/general manager Jerry Jones at all about his stance?

"We all had a discussion together. People shared different views, and obviously people have different political views and political opinions, but I think obviously it was a healthy conversation and that doesn't mean that there weren't times where people were passionate. But, it was a healthy conversation amongst 32 different clubs to figure out how do we progress this to make sure that we're not having a distraction, not talking about issues that aren't central to what the players are trying to get across, but how do we make this something that the league can really put their weight behind and get to real progress in our country."

Is the dialog over the National Anthem and the fact that the protest happens during the National Anthem? Do you think that's a distraction? How do you view this?

"I might view it very differently than other people. And whether it's fair or not, I think a lot of our fans have expressed that they do think that this is a distraction. I understand where fans are coming from. Our fans, they are looking at three hours on a Sunday where they want to sit down with their family and friends and enjoy a football game. I understand where they might not want to talk about political or social issues. And I think that's the conversation that we're trying to have with everybody, owners, League, players, and saying, 'Alright, there's a lot of attention around this. Let's make sure that we make this message much, much clearer. Let's make sure that people know that you're not being unpatriotic, you're not being what some of the negative folks have labeled you to be.' Let's get that message clear and let's figure out how to move this to real progress in our country."

I think TV viewership is down more than seven-percent this year from last year. Did that come up either with the players in the owner meeting at large later on?

"I think you look at TV viewership across all platforms and it's down. I think the NFL is holding its own much more so than any other platform. I'm sure that this is a contributor to it, but we're also in a changing environment. You guys see it in your industry. The world is changing to more of a digital platform and television now is still the number one medium for professional football, but that's continuing to expand, it's continuing to change. So, there's more to it than just people are tuning out because of demonstrations that players are making. There's much more to it, but we collectively have a business issue that we need to worry about, about changing platforms. But, we have an issue at hand that says, 'Alright, how do we make sure that we hear you and we're now listening and let's make sure that we can take this into progress.'"

What's the end game from the NFL owner's perspective of how you guys can get what you want out of this and the players get what they want out of this?

"I think the underlying message, and I think this is very, very important, the owners were very clear in our meeting with just players and owners that this is not a trade. This is not, 'We're going to do this for you and quid pro quo you stand up.' That was not there."

And from a player standpoint, I don't think that they want to give up their First Amendment rights for any amount of money or any amount of support for things from a social standpoint. I think we want to have a better partnership and a better understanding of one another to say, 'We would like to get back to just playing football.' I don't think anybody should be ashamed of saying that, because our fans are telling you we want to get back to football. But, our players are saying we want our message to be heard clearly and loudly and that's what we're trying to figure out. How do we make sure that we encourage you to stand, but we're not requiring you to do anything? You're allowed to do anything that you want from the First Amendment. You can express yourself, but we want you to stand because you want to stand. We're not going to make you stand. And we want to make our country and our communities a better place not because you're forcing us to, but because we're compelled to and I think that's the important thing here."

How do the San Francisco 49ers plan on making this community a better place?

"We've obviously don't a lot of stuff in this community to start. When you look at the STEAM Education program that helped us become the ESPN Humanitarian Team of the Year. We want to make sure that a lot of the kids that are here are kids that wouldn't otherwise be able to attend. We want to make sure that that's a free education system. We want to make sure that they get bussed here with no costs. We want to make sure that they get a meal. We want to make sure that you're encouraging kids from an education standpoint. I think that's the base of this. You want to make sure that education, healthcare, those basic fundamentals in a community exist for everybody. Not just the middle class and the upper class, but folks that have a tough socioeconomic background. You want to make sure that there's a better understanding with law enforcement and our players. I think law enforcement gets lost in this. Where there are things players are protesting about, but there's so many great men and women in law enforcement that care about reforming criminal justice. They care about working with players and understanding one another. I think that's the next step for us is making sure that we're working with our local police departments. Whether it's San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Clara and beyond, and figuring out how do we come together. One of the things that we've talked about is running our flag football program starting next season through police athletic leagues, and working with them. I think the most fundamental way that football players and communities can come together is you have police officers that are coaching, you have young kids that are playing, and you have our players who are helping sort of bring awareness and bring sort of a bigger cache to that. I think that's a great approach. It's also working with our players here. What's going on in your local communities? These are the things that are going on in California. How do we help you go to Sacramento and lobby for reform in legislation? How do we work with you and your communities where there might not be as much wealth as there is in the Bay Area? How do we help you set something up in some of the areas that you're from? Again, from the legislative standpoint, from the grassroots standpoint. That's a very, very big effort. I don't want to overshadow the complexity there is to have 32 teams and 1,800 players come together and figure out the right way to build this out. So, it's going to take time. But, that's the next step is really what are we doing collectively? From a team standpoint, I think we take some of the things that

we've been doing already and we continue to add to it and we continue to get wins where we can."

Is QB Colin Kaepernick being treated fairly since his unemployment, by the League?

"It's very difficult for me to say that, with Colin being here for a long period of time. Obviously, there's the lawsuit that's going on, so it's hard for me to get into any details or really share my opinion. But, I don't believe that there's base to that claim that he's being blackballed."

You're in a market that's a little more receptive to protesting players than others. The way you've approached this since Colin started, it seems like these are your core beliefs as far as the First Amendment and players rights. You took a stance on the bathroom bill in North Carolina. What has shaped you as far as having a little more progressive beliefs?

"I would say living in California and opening my mind to talking to people that aren't necessarily like me. Growing up in Youngstown, Ohio, Youngstown is not the most progressive place in the world. Some of you guys have been there. We've stayed. Youngstown has a different mentality. So, for me to meet with the LGBT community, for me to meet with folks that have different racial backgrounds and different ethnic backgrounds, different socioeconomic backgrounds, again, I think everything starts from conversation. The more you can have conversation, the more you can actually see where other people are coming from, I think the more enlightened you can be. For me, I'm not the most left wing person in the world. I realize people are trying to sort of paint me as that. That's not my background politically and how I grew up. But, I think a lot of these things are common sense issues. When you actually sit down and talk with people and you know where people are coming from, it's hard not to be sympathetic and empathetic."

You guys made such a big change in the offseason, getting a new coach, new general manager, a lot of newness here. 0-6 right now, how do you temper discouragement with the record in terms of where the franchise is headed and how you feel about it?

"We're getting much closer to where we want to be. Obviously we're not there yet. I wanted to make sure that [general manager] John [Lynch] and [head coach] Kyle [Shanahan] came in here and had a very, very long runway, that they had the ability to get the roster where they wanted it and knew that this wasn't going to happen overnight. I think our players are encouraged. They see the progress that they're making. They know that they aren't quite there yet, and when you're losing on the last drive of the last five games and you're really, really close. That's part of having a very young team, having a team that there's been a ton of turnover, almost historic turnover. We need to figure out how do we fight together and how do we make that last push to win on that last drive. We're starting to get there. I think our players, as much as you might not like the record, I don't get the sense that our players are discouraged at all. I think there's great belief in Kyle, there's great belief in John, there's great belief in the foundation that we're building. We haven't won enough games in the past few years. But, I think our

fans have been fantastic in supporting John, Kyle, this existing team, and knowing that we're building this thing for the future. We don't want a quick fix and sacrifice the long-term success for a few wins that may or may not mean anything this season. We want to get our team back to championship caliber level. I think that's the trajectory that we're on. The results might not show it. But, I think the feeling that you get around this building and the feeling that you get talking to the players and the coaches, we're much closer than what our record would suggest."

You'll be honoring former 49ers WR Dwight Clark on Sunday. Your thoughts on Dwight and how far back do you have memories of him?

"Dwight was always sort of part of our extended family. He and my uncle are extremely, extremely close. Knowing Dwight as a player, knowing Dwight after he was done playing, whether he was in the front office or when he was in Cleveland, I've always had so much love, respect and admiration for him. It's going to be special to have a day that really honors him, that we can celebrate the great person that he is, certainly the 49ers icon and legend that he is and allow him to be with his teammates and really enjoy the glory that he deserves and the accolades that he deserves from this fan base."

The last couple of times you guys have hosted the Cowboys there's been a lot of blue jerseys in the stadium. Would it disappoint you if that's the case on a day that you're honoring that team and that special player?

"I think every team has tickets on the secondary market. I'd love for our fans to be the ones that are buying those as opposed to the opposing team. I would just encourage it, don't do it for me, do it for Dwight. Dwight deserves to see a lot of Red and Gold on Sunday. I think he'll see that. I think he's going to see a lot of passion from the 49ers Faithful."