

TRANSCRIPTIONS



**Defensive Coordinator Robert Saleh
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We just learned about DB Jimmie Ward. What does that do as far as your approach for the rest of the week and for Sunday in particular?

“It doesn’t change much. [DB Tarvarius] T-Moore has been doing a great job and showed that he’s earned the right to go out there and play. We’ve still got [CB] K’Waun Williams, [CB] Emmanuel Moseley can play nickel, [DB] D.J. Reed [Jr.] is still there along with [DB Antone] Exum [Jr.]. So, we’re fine, it doesn’t really change anything that we’re doing game plan-wise.”

Are you confident that K’Waun is going to be ready this weekend?

“Yeah.”

Obviously, he didn’t have a whole lot of preseason work, but what did you see from him obviously coming off his ACL, what stands out for LB Kwon Alexander’s game in your mind?

“Kwon Alexander?”

Yes.

“Kwon Alexander looks good. I know he’s coming off that ACL, but he’s really progressed throughout training camp. Big thing for Kwon is to know that he’s a superstar and he doesn’t have to go to Tampa and show it, he already is. He just needs to show up, play his best, doesn’t have to do anything special. I’m excited for him to get this action and I know he’s excited, but he’s got to understand that it’s another game, another team.”

How has DL Nick Bosa looked this week?

“Bosa’s looked good so far. Obviously, we’re monitoring his reps and all that stuff, so he’s progressing. He feels good and especially with these days leading up are going to be critical for him with rehab and solidifying everything for game day.”

He was saying the other day he’s never tried as hard as he has to come back and make every day count. Did you see that?

“Yeah, we all saw it. Relentless. Relentless with the training staff, relentless with the strength crew and it’s very important to him. You can’t ask for much more than that from a man in general.”

Are you not quite certain if he will be able to go on Sunday?

“Nick, he’s going.”

He’s going.

“He should be.”

How excited are you to have him and DL Dee Ford on the field together with the rest of the defense for the first time?

“If we can get to Sunday with everyone playing, there’s a little bit of an unknown, it is exciting because we know what it looks when the four guys up front are humming. I think the whole league knows what it looks like in the system when the four guys up front are humming and if it’s anything like we think it’s going to be, it’s going to be pretty cool. But, it doesn’t really matter until we get out on the field. Again, it comes down to them executing their techniques and operating because it’s not just something they can do and show up. Tampa’s got a really good team. They were a top-five offense last year. They’ve got a really good scheme with [Tampa Bay Buccaneers head coach] Bruce [Arians] so it’s not like we can just show up to the stadium. They still have to have that mindset. They still have to play with technique and they still have to play with the fundamentals that we talk about.”

Is Dee Ford a three-down player in particular this week coming off that treatment?

“We’ll see. We’re working through that this week. So, when it comes to all that stuff, the performance staff is still working through the week along with Nick to make sure they are ready. Everything looks promising, but until we get that final snap, I’ll defer that one to coach.”

If there’s a critique of his game, I guess, it would probably be his work against the run. Given the other players you have at defensive end who can play the run pretty well, would it be more advantageous to keep Ford fresh second and third down situation?

“Always. The versatility of our defense up front, the whole design of it is so you can get big guys to play big downs when you’ve got 12, 13-personnel in there. When they get their speed group out there, we can get faster. That D-Line is very versatile. [DL] Ronnie [Blair III], [DL] Jullian Taylor, [DL] Sheldon [Day], [DL] Solomon [Thomas], the whole front, go through all of them, but there is good versatility where a lot of guys can go inside and out. Being able to mix and match guys so that way we can keep all of them fresh, not just Dee Ford, not just [DL DeForest Buckner] Buck, not just Bosa, but all of them, keeping them fresh so we can keep coming at them because it is a grueling game, the type of style that Bruce and his staff play with their run game and the way they just lean on you. So, it’s going to be imperative for us as a coaching staff to make sure that our guys are fresh throughout the game.”

When you go into a game where it’s goes to be 95 degrees potentially at kickoff, how do you communicate the constant rotations that you are going to have to have on that defensive line?

“That’s what we are working through now. [Defensive line coach Kris] Kocurek is, to me, one of the best in the business in terms of getting all that stuff done. He has a really good feel for his D-Line and what each one’s strength are. He’s been training them all year and all offseason, OTAs and training camp to throw four guys out there and they can play all four spots. I feel very confident about our ability to roll guys to make sure they stay fresh.”

It seems complicated where you might want one call with these four guys out there and then a different call potentially with another four guys. Is that part of your thought process too?

“It could happen, but they are all taught that it doesn’t matter what I call, they all have to execute. They’ve done a great job working their tails off in that room where it doesn’t matter what I call, they can all still execute exactly the same. Really excited about that group and very confident that we’ll be able to accomplish what we’re trying to get done with the rotations.”

There’s been so much talk about Dee’s first step since he’s been here, everyone’s talked about it. What goes into it besides just seeing the ball, seeing the lineman, hearing the cadence?

“Mamma and papa, I guess you could say. Some good DNA and genes. But, he’s got tremendous get off. He’s very tentative to the whole get off part, the ball movement, just anything that he can find, he’ll trigger off of. And he’s very consistent with it. When he gets off, that first step is so fast. Tackles just have to pay attention to it. They have to honor it. But, what makes his game really good is that he has that speed which has tackles backing out anyway, but one of the most underrated things he does is he can put his, he can turn it right into your chest and turn into a bull rush in a heartbeat. He has a lot of power to him. A speed rusher is always as good as his bull rush and he has a very, very underrated bull rush. I’m excited for him to get out and go to work and I know he’s chopping at the bit.”

Where do things stand with CB Jason Verrett?

“Jason’s working through, again, that goes back to the performance staff. He’s been in practice, he’s looked good and I know he wants to get back bad. He’s going in the right direction and working with the performance staff and those guys to get ready.”

With him, do you need to see maybe a couple weeks of practicing at a high level just to know that he’s healthy before you can stick him in game action?

“You know, it’s no different than anyone else. He was, right before he got hurt in training camp, he was starting to take a step, where it was like, okay, you can see the elite movement skills, you can see it all, and then it was unfortunate what happened to him in practice. Jason knows in practice you can see his movement. He’s very, very close, and he’ll tell you he’s close and it’s just a matter of getting in there and working with the performance staff. When he’s ready to go, I don’t think anyone, even you guys, you’ll all notice it.”

So, it’s solely on the outside for him?

“Verrett? Right now, he’s just outside.”

With Jason, his injury history obviously would be a red flag for any team. What convinced you that he was worth taking a chance on?

“You know what, I think it was a combination of both. I think Jason took a chance on us just as much as we took a chance on him if you want to say that. I do believe that a guy of his skill set, his mindset, I think one of the things that no one ever talks about with Jason is his leadership skills, his character and his mindset. I think whenever you go into those things, it’s a relationship between the player and the organization. He’s taking a chance on us as much as we are with him. I feel like, from an organization standpoint, doing everything we can to help him get back to what he was, I think there’s a very important role that the organization plays in that. So, it’s not just all on Jason or on us taking a chance on him, but the relationship goes back and forth. Feel good about where it’s at, and now it’s just a matter of him getting right so he can go play, because when he is right, he’s special, as everyone knows.”

Have you seen glimpses on the practice field of the Pro Bowl version of him?

“Yeah, I’m telling you, right before he got hurt, he showed a couple of plays where, God, he was close. It was really, really close. So now, like I said, he’s getting closer again, he’s just got to continue to work through it.”

What challenges do a Tampa Bay Buccaneers defensive coordinator Todd Bowles defense present an opposing offense and what kind of advice do you give head coach Kyle Shanahan preparing for his scheme?

“You know, Todd’s defense is a little bit different than ours, obviously. They’re a lot more pressure based. Kyle’s game planned enough on him, so I’ll be honest with you, I don’t know if I ever give Kyle any advice. He’s pretty good at what he does. I don’t know if he needs my two cents.”

You alluded to the style of Bruce Arians’ offense. How would you describe it? What makes it unique and what are the hallmarks of his scheme?

“His scheme, they’re very deliberate in terms of, especially with the run, they’re very committed to the run game. There’s games where they’ll have 40 carries for 100 yards, but I mean, it’s three yards, it’s three yards, it’s three yards and boom for 10, and three yards. They don’t care because the philosophy, they’re going to keep leaning on you, they’re going to double team you, they’re going to wear you out. So, you’re going to go into this game, it’s a dog fight, a very underrated dog fight, because you see just one back. It doesn’t look like anything special, but it is a very grueling game, their style, and you’ve got to have your mind right. It’s going to be physical, and you’ve got to be ready to fit in a run no matter how many times you feel like you’ve done it and how many times you think, it just keeps coming. So, discipline is a major key and getting ready for a dog fight is the big thing.”

Did he take that from Pittsburgh? Is that sort of--?

“This is all, I think so. I mean Pittsburgh, you saw it some with Indianapolis when he was there, Arizona, obviously. It’s a very specific system. You can see they have a system and it’s very, very good. It’s a straining system.”

To clarify, you're proceeding as if Jimmie Ward won't be playing? Is there a chance he could play Sunday?

"I haven't gotten full word yet. I'm still waiting for performance staff. Again, that would be something for coach."

It seemed like he had a pretty firm grasp on the starting free safety spot, but has he shown you enough to be the top player in the slot, too, with Tarvarius playing free safety?

"Are you talking about Jimmie Ward? Jimmie, I stand by it. I do believe if Jimmie can get through a 16-game season, I think the whole world will see how good he is. He's a very special talent. He can play corner, he can play nickel, he can play free safety, he can do all of it. Him playing nickel would not have been an issue, him playing free safety, knock on wood, we have some versatility where we've got Tarvarius Moore where if K'Waun Williams needed a break, we can shuffle guys around. With Jimmie, him being able to play free, him playing nickel, him playing corner, he can do all of it. It's just a matter of getting him into one spot so he can go execute."

How disappointing is that to see a player like Jimmie, who you have all this confidence in, and his body not be able to hold up for that 16-game season like you want him to?

"It's not disappointing from our standpoint. I'm more hurt for him because I know how hard he works, I know what he puts in and I know how important it is for him and his family. I don't feel bad for me at all. I've always said that the NFL train stops for nobody, it's just going to keep on rolling. I do feel terrible for the people who are left behind when the train is moving, because I know how hard they work, I know how important it is. And so, for Jimmie to just get better and trust that something good's about to happen to just keep his spirit up. He's a great football player, he's just got to get to the football field."

It seems like it's always a bone that breaks with him. Is there anything, is it a milk issue? Is there anything he can do?

"You know, our performance staff, they do all these tests, he comes out above average in everything. It's been bad luck. I know, you're like, history repeats itself or whatever. The stuff that happens to him is bad luck. It really is bad luck, so something good is going to happen to him. He's a good man, so it's got to."