

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

TRANSCRIPTIONS



General Manager John Lynch
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San Francisco 49ers
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What's it like coming here with a quarterback?

“It’s pretty good. I remember very much, I was just thinking about it over here, last year that was a primary focus, finding our guy. It was one of the first things after [head coach] Kyle [Shanahan] and I got together, we talked about the culture we want to set and all that, but I think we both agreed you have to find that guy at that position. It’s of such premium importance. It didn’t happen in the Draft process last year, but some fortuitous things kind of broke our way during the season. I really commend Kyle for his patience once we got [QB] Jimmy [Garoppolo] and allowing him to take time to learn his system the best he could. Everybody was saying, ‘play him, hey you traded for him, let’s play him.’ He made sure that he was at a spot where we were setting him up for success and then he went in and as we like to say he balled out, he played really well and he made our team better. Then it became a focus let’s get him locked up. I think it was a deal that worked out for everyone. We’re very appreciative to Jimmy and [sports agent] Don Yee and his team that we were able to do it so swiftly. I think that’s a huge bonus for us that we have him locked up going into free agency. I think it makes it a place where a lot of people want to be and we’re excited about that.”

Looking back, last year when we were here you described not having a quarterback as liberating.

“Well, we didn’t have a quarterback on our roster at one point. I’m always an optimist and I was trying to be one there. But, the idea was that we could shape it as we wanted to. We were able to do that. I think what’s even more liberating is having Jimmy under contract.”

What did you like about him?

“Well, we had studied him. One of the things that Kyle and I did is we spent a lot of time when we first got there together, actually [former NFL head coach] Tony Dungy was the guy who said that the best thing for you to do is close your door with Kyle is watch film and talk ball. And so we did that. Kyle had a lot of tapes together at each position and this is what you look for. Some of the clips that were showing up, various guys at the quarterback position, but Jimmy was a guy. I had broadcasted Patriots games and studied him a little bit. But, that tape I kept watching and the physical skills were noticeable and his ability to quickly get rid of the ball efficiently and accurately and all those things. So, we started watching more, there wasn’t a whole lot to watch, but what

you watched you really liked. It's well documented, we don't like talking about it a whole lot, but we made some efforts right away to try to do something and they were re-buffed quicker than I could ask and so we kind of just moved on. During the season, like I said, some things broke our way and he became available."

What is it about him that you think can set him up to have long-term success and that last year wasn't just a flash?

"I think the physical traits. He can really quickly process and get rid of the football in a fashion that I would say is elite. But, then you go and study the makeup of a guy and the only way to do that is to see him around his teammates. To me, the best leaders, the best quarterbacks, they make everyone around them better. We watched our team, I will say that it coincided with we had played a bunch of young guys, we had gone through just a brutal series of injuries, so it also coincided with young guys getting experience and us getting healthy as a team. But, there's no mistaking that when he came in and started playing it lifted our team and it lifted everyone around him. And then, just his makeup, his work-ethic, he never left the facility. Yes, he was trying to learn a new system and he needed to, but his diligence, the way his teammates just kind of liked being around him, he's one of the guys, even though he's not just one of the guys, you know? That whole deal we watched it and it became clear in our minds that this is a guy that we wanted to move forward with and we're pleased that we've done it."

There are team that go 20 years without a star quarterback. Do you feel like you guys hit the lottery and that one just fell in your lap?

"We also know that there's a lot that remains. The story is not yet written. And Jimmy knows that. That's one thing that he's very cognizant of, that we've got a lot of work to do. And we've got a lot of work to do as a team. I think [former NFL head coach] Bill Parcells said it best, you are what your record says you are. We were a 6-10 team, we were 1-5 in our division. Did we finish strong? Absolutely. I can tell you that in Tampa when we were trying to turn it around, there were years we finished strong. That doesn't guarantee success the next year. So, it's back to try and improve our franchise in every way we can and it's back to good old fashioned hard work to make sure that we do carry the momentum that we had forward into next year."

I know every year is different, but what are some of the things that you can take from that finish and carry into next year?

"Well, I think the most positive thing is we had a lot of young players. We were playing 15, 16 rookies throughout last year and they performed really well. They're guys that fit what we want to be about as an organization. Watching that take place and watching that develop, that has us very excited. Are we still a work in progress? Absolutely. We still have work to do. That's part of the great challenge. We're very excited. We want to continue to improve our team through every vehicle that we're allowed, free agency, re-signing our own guys. We talk about Jimmy, but [DB] K'Waun Williams was last year, [C] Daniel Kilgore our center, [DL] Cassius Marsh is a guy who came to us midstream last year and we got him redone. [OL] Garry Gilliam is a swing tackle that we just re-

signed. We want to keep that going. We want to reward our own players. So, every means necessary and at our disposal we'll use to try to improve our team."

When you watch defensive backs nowadays, how does that change your evaluation or how different is that for you to evaluate because you were a safety?

"It's all part of it. The game is much more spread out. They throw the football much more. It's played much more in space. And so, you better have players who can operate in space and who can do a number of different things. [Alabama DB] Minkah Fitzpatrick is a guy that is highly thought of, and we feel the same about him, but that versatility that he brings is something special. We drafted a kid, [DB] Adrian Colbert, last year one of the things that drew us to him is that we knew he could play corner and we knew he could play safety. That kind of flexibility gives you a lot of options. We also knew at the least he was going to be a very effective special teams player. So yes, those things, versatility, is always a good thing and it's something I think everyone's looking for."

Is it to the point where if you're a defensive back and you can only do one thing, you better do that exceedingly well?

"I think that's always been the case though. I think versatility has always been an important part of the game. I do think there is an element though the way the game is being played that you have to be able to do a number of things very well."

What did you think of QB C.J. Beathard's performance as a rookie and what do you think his upside is?

"We think very highly of C.J. I can tell you one of the reasons that it was, I wouldn't say easy, but easier for us to be patient and Kyle was making those decisions with Jimmy was that C.J. was playing well in our mind and was improving each and every week. C.J. has handled this tremendously well, with a tremendous amount of class. It's motivated him to become even better, to continue working on his craft. We love his makeup, what he's all about. My message to him, become the next Jimmy Garoppolo. You keep playing well, good things will happen for you. He understands that. I think having been around football in his family, and congratulations to his grandfather [Bobby Beathard] for his induction into the Hall. I was a Charger fan growing up and so I know C.J. is proud of that, but I think that background has prepared him for, yeah there is going to be some adversity when it looked like things were going so well that could have been hard for a young man to take, but he responded in the fashion that we thought he would and I think there's exciting times ahead for C.J. Beathard."

What's the outlook for the young guys from last year in TE George Kittle and WR Trent Taylor?

"Those are good players that we got in mid to later rounds. Again, go back to, I really credit Kyle, they have such a feel for what they want, the position traits, the skills that fit those positions. And so, that allowed us to identify some guys like that that we knew at the right time we wanted to pull the trigger on. Both those guys developed. I think for George, his talent is pretty unique. I think he's going to continue to have to figure out ways to stay on the field, stay healthy. The injury bug did hit him. That does happen with a lot of rookies, it's a long season, but we're very high on him. Trent Taylor has a skill,

he can separate, he can get open. When you have a quarterback like Jimmy that can put it on you, that's a pretty good combination. So, we're real excited about both those players. They happen to be roommates, so yeah that worked out well for us."

Are you going to use Jimmy Garoppolo in free agency as part of the recruiting pitch?

"Would you? Yeah, I am. We are. Yes, absolutely."

Does having Jimmy G accelerate or jumpstart your timetable of turning you from a rebuild to competing?

"Like I said, we're very much a work in progress, but our goal is to be a team that competes and competes for championships. That's why I got into this thing. That's why we got into this thing together. That's what we talk to our players about. But, I think the important thing, and what Kyle does a great job is just focus on what you can control and that's our effort each and every day to become that team. Timetables, I'm not going to do that, but yes having a quarterback it makes you better. He made us better last year and we expect that going forward."

With what we've seen from running backs such as New Orleans Saints RB Alvin Kamara, what has that done for the value of running backs in the Draft as far as how high you should take them and what do you think of the two from Georgia?

"That whole dynamic of that position, in many people's mind losing value. But I think much like a quarterback, when there's a great one it's tough to deal with. I know that from having played defense. Is that changing? I don't know. I think everyone's got their own perspective on that. But, that is a position where you can affect the game in a great way. And so, as for the two young men at Georgia, both really good football players. I think the coolest thing is that they were both talented and great competitors but they were each other's biggest fans. I think they'll both have bright futures."

Speaking of the running back position, I guess you told the local media this week that you guys are still talking to RB Carlos Hyde. Are you still thinking of bringing him back and if not, what have you seen out of RB Matt Breida and also RB Joe Williams?

"We've had discussions with Carlos all the way through the season. We haven't been able to come to an agreement, but those discussions are ongoing. This is a great opportunity. His representatives are down here, we'll continue to talk. I kind of yesterday was making a general statement about all of our free agents. We have an opportunity and we will talk to all of them right down to the wire. I wouldn't say anything is imminent there. As for Matt Breida, he was a guy we identified in free agency. I really credit our scouts and our coaching staff for doing that. He's a good football player. He's made of the right stuff. As for Joe Williams, he got injured last year, but there was a reason we were excited. Now he's got to make that come to fruition on the field. He's got some skills that are unique and explosive and now he's got to put it together and make it happen."

When you evaluate Louisville QB Lamar Jackson, how do you reconcile the fact that you are in great shape with a young quarterback, with the fact that we're talking about probably the most electrifying athlete in college football?

"Well, I think that's one thing, while last year maybe it was a primary focus, the quarterback position, I don't think we can just turn a blind eye to the quarterback position. I probably won't be watching those drills as closely as I was this time last year, but we're looking at all these players. Lamar is a unique athlete, a special athlete, and I'm excited to see what happens with him. I really am."

You played for Oakland Raiders head coach Jon Gruden. You also came back from the broadcast booth. What do you think about him coming back?

"I think it's great for football. I think Jon brings a lot. He brings a lot of enthusiasm, a lot of excitement. He's tireless in his work ethic. I loved playing for him. It was a short tenure I had with him, two years. One of those years I was pretty banged up, but I loved playing for him and I think the league is better when he's involved in it. As for the broadcasting element, I'm sure like my experience, you see the league through a different lens when you're in those buildings. He did games like I did and you get to go meet with head coaches, you get to go meet with general managers and quarterbacks. You can really learn a lot if you just listen. I think Jon has flirted with this for a long time. I think he's excited. I've talked to him. He is excited. I'm just looking forward to competing with him in that coin toss tomorrow."

With Lamar, are you evaluating him as a quarterback?

"I think his success at the quarterback position speaks for itself. I think everybody has their own opinions and to each their own how they're looking at someone. But yes, I would say we're evaluating him as a quarterback."

Last year you made the first big splash of the Draft trading back and letting the Bears take their quarterback. This year you're a little bit further back of that area of the first half of the Draft. Is that an opportunity with guys like Lamar Jackson might be in that top-tier quarterback where you'd be willing to move back and make a play to get some more value?

"I think we demonstrated last year, I really felt that I'd be much more conservative in the Draft but some things fell out way. I think you always keep an open mind. Sure, we'd certainly be willing to move around a little bit if some people covet some guys, not only at that position, but any other position. Unless we feel so strongly about a player that is available at our disposal. I'm not trying to evade the question, but there are so many options. I think you evaluate all of them."

How do your roster needs match up with the Draft?

"I think through and through. You can always get better in this league. We do have some positions that we've targeted that we need to improve on. I think they're fairly obvious as to where they are for some people. We'll do that. We'll try, as I said earlier, by any means available to us to improve ourselves."

How do you and your scouts and coaches typically use your 15 minutes?

“That’s the challenge. It’s 15 minutes, so how can you be most effective. We try a variety of things. One thing you try to do is break the ice. I think you don’t hold it against a kid that he’s been coached, because all these kids are coached now. But really the ones that come off the best are the ones that are really authentic and are their true selves and honest. I think one thing you could do is try to break the ice with some personal stories, some humor, to try to get them to be themselves. But, a variety of techniques like other people use, just good old conversation on what’s important to them, on why they love the game of football and things that are important to us that you try to glean from them. We throw film on sometimes. That’s a great avenue to have them explain what they were doing. You can tell a lot. Some players have instant recall and can tell you not only what their job was, but everybody else on that field what other guys struggled to communicate that. Does that really vault up a player or kill a player? No, you don’t want to make your evaluation solely on that. But like everything, it’s part of the process.”

With Cassius Marsh, what do you think might have worked out for him in San Francisco that didn’t in New England?

“You know, I think he found an environment that number one fit his skillset. We have that LEO position, that edge rusher, and everyone’s looking for an edge rusher. Maybe it was a better fit for him in terms of the scheme and then I think he just felt comfortable in our culture and our locker room. He played well for us. When guys play well and we can see a future for them, we’re going to do our best to sign them and we did a deal that I thought was fair for him and fair for us. It gives him a lot of upside if he really performs and we think he has an opportunity to do that. Now, it’s incumbent upon him just like every other player to go make that happen. But, we’re pleased to have him a part of us moving forward.”

Is he just a pass rusher for you?

“He’s also a great special team’s player. He could play some SAM linebacker, but really, we see him as an edge rusher.”

(inaudible)

“Yeah. I could tell you we don’t have him in our 60 interviews. I marvel at those guys. You talk about maybe it being undervalued. I don’t know if that’s your question, but I’ve watched teams when they lose that guy in-game and it is panic mode. It’s certainly important. That job and that role is often overlooked, but so critical to a team’s success. It’s extremely important and I’ll be watching that guy closely.”