

49ers Clips – February 5, 2017

Local Media

Can Kyle Shanahan's Falcons offense rub off on 49ers?

By Cam Inman, San Jose Mercury News

<http://www.mercurynews.com/2017/02/04/can-kyle-shanahans-falcons-offense-rub-off-on-49ers/>

49ers CEO Jed York hopes new regime brings 'long run of success'

By Nick Wagoner, ESPN.com

http://www.espn.com/blog/san-francisco-49ers/post/_id/23222/49ers-ceo-jed-york-hopes-new-regime-brings-long-run-of-success

Bill Walsh, Ronnie Lott played big role in shaping John Lynch

By Jenna Laine, ESPN.com

http://www.espn.com/blog/tampa-bay-buccaneers/post/_id/16114/bill-walsh-ronnie-lott-had-big-role-in-shaping-john-lynch

National Media

Larry Fitzgerald, Eli Manning share NFL Man of Year Award

By Kent Somers, The Arizona Republic

<http://www.azcentral.com/story/sports/nfl/cardinals/2017/02/04/larry-fitzgerald-eli-manning-share-nfl-man-year-award/97503758/>

NFL: Tomlinson and Warner headline seven-man Hall of Fame class

By Gary Klein, Los Angeles Times

<http://www.latimes.com/sports/nfl/la-sp-nfl-report-20170204-story.html>

Alex Mack will play Super Bowl LI with fracture in left fibula

By Adam Schefter, ESPN.com

http://www.espn.com/nfl/story/_/id/18623474/atlanta-falcons-center-alex-mack-play-super-bowl-li-fracture-left-fibula

Patriots notebook: Dion Lewis, James White hope to follow in Super Bowl footsteps of Kevin Faulk, Shane Vereen, et al.

By Jeff Howe, Boston Herald

http://www.bostonherald.com/sports/patriots/2017/02/patriots_notebook_dion_lewis_james_white_hope_to_follow_in_super_bowl

Sean Payton plans to use 'simple scrambler' to block use of social media before kickoff

By Herbie Teope, New Orleans Times-Picayune

http://www.nola.com/saints/index.ssf/2017/02/sean_payton_plans_to_use_simple.html#incart_river_index

Local Clips – Full Version

Can Kyle Shanahan's Falcons offense rub off on 49ers?

By Cam Inman, San Jose Mercury News

It's no wonder Kyle Shanahan panicked when his backpack briefly went missing with his Super Bowl game plan for the Atlanta Falcons. Shanahan's scripts are worth swiping.

Atlanta has scored touchdowns on the opening drives of eight consecutive games heading into Sunday's Lombardi Trophy prize fight with the New England Patriots.

"It speaks to Kyle doing a great job of putting together some early plays and plans for us," Falcons quarterback Matt Ryan told reporters during this week's preparations in Houston.

Shanahan's emergence as an offensive savant will thrust him into the 49ers head coaching role after the Super Bowl, by all expectations.

Monday's great backpack caper was an innocent mix-up by a reporter who grabbed the wrong bag. No game plan was seen or hurt in the 30-minute mystery.

Preparing such game plans, however, are just one element to Shanahan's "genius," as Washington quarterback Kirk Cousins has labeled his former offensive coordinator. A 24-play script is just the start to the offensive symphony Shanahan conducts from his coaches' booth.

"Then it comes down to guys just going out there and executing, trusting our plan, trusting our preparation and going out and playing well from the start," Ryan added.

The last time a Shanahan served as an offensive coordinator in a Super Bowl, Kyle's father, Mike, presided over the 49ers' unit. Three snaps into Super Bowl XXIX, Steve Young connected with Jerry Rice for a 44-yard touchdown pass in the eventual 49-26 rout of the San Diego Chargers.

Julio Jones is the Falcons' version of a go-to receiver, as evident by his last outing: 9 catches, 180 yards, two touchdowns in the 41-21 win over Green Bay for the NFC Championship.

The Patriots can focus on containing Jones, but Shanahan has other tricks in that playbook for the league's highest-scoring offense.

"People double teaming Julio and try to take him out of the game definitely isn't something new to us," Shanahan said. "... Julio definitely deserves that respect. They've made us go other places and this year, guys have done a great job with it."

The Falcons have lots of not just "guys" but bona fide play makers, and Shanahan makes sure to tap into that vast resource, which he won't have available by current 49ers standards.

Ryan threw touchdown passes to a NFL-record 13 different receivers this regular season en route to MVP consideration, while completing nearly 70 percent of his passes.

If not Jones, Ryan can turn to fellow wide receivers Mohamed Sanu and Taylor Gabriel, former Stanford tight ends Austin Hooper and Levine Toilolo and the running back tandem of Devonta Freeman and Tevin Coleman.

Shanahan's in-game adjustments are worth applauding, especially when considering the Falcons outscored opponents 135-52 in the third quarter this season. In stark contrast, the 49ers got outscored 98-25 coming out of halftime.

Shanahan knows when to exploit defenses with the running game, too, as evident by the three-touchdown performance of Freeman in a 41-13 win over the undermanned 49ers on Dec. 18. His first touchdown, by the way, came six snaps into the first drive.

"Kyle as 'OC' has been really fun to play for because the outside-zone scheme has been really friendly to offensive linemen," center Alex Mack said. "We love running the ball as offensive linemen, and when you run the ball and have a coordinator committed to running it, it helps you on pass plays."

Patriots coach Bill Belichick commended Shanahan for how the Falcons "move the ball relentlessly up and down the field with very few mistakes."

Falcons counterpart Dan Quinn has made no secret that a key to the Falcons' success is their ball security. They lost only four fumbles and Ryan had only seven passes intercepted in the regular season; they had no turnovers in their two playoff wins entering Sunday's game.

"They're very explosive and can make a play on any play that they can score," Patriots linebacker Rob Ninkovich said.

The Falcons have scored over 30 in 13 of 18 games. In stark contrast, the 49ers haven't put up 30 points in any game the past two seasons, last doing so in December 2014 under Jim Harbaugh.

If Shanahan indeed becomes the 49ers' third coach in as many years since Harbaugh left, the onus will be to revive their offense — and the franchise as a whole.

"Whatever Kyle chooses to do after the season, we wish him the best success," Mack added. "He's great coach. He's a very real guy. He has a really good offensive system and we have a lot of success because of him."

49ers CEO Jed York hopes new regime brings 'long run of success'

By Nick Wagoner, ESPN.com

Because of NFL tampering rules, San Francisco 49ers CEO Jed York can't openly discuss presumptive next head coach Kyle Shanahan. In fact, York can't really even say his name, at least not in a context other than his opinion of how Shanahan is as a coach.

But York found his own not-so-subtle ways of strongly hinting at who the franchise's next coach is while appearing on the NFL Network's red carpet show before the awards show on Saturday night.

"I will be cheering for the Falcons," York said, laughing.

York and the Niners shocked the NFL world last week by naming former NFL safety John Lynch as general manager. Lynch's candidacy had been a secret throughout the process, as the team publicly acknowledged nine other candidates before opting for Lynch.

Shanahan, meanwhile, has interviewed twice with the team and it's the worst-kept secret in the league that he will become the team's next coach. The 49ers can't officially hire Shanahan until after Sunday's Super Bowl. That's expected to happen in short order after that game, though, and it's reasonable to expect the team to introduce Shanahan as the coach next week.

Although York didn't call him by name, he did offer a little insight into what he hopes to see from Lynch and Shanahan when they take over the team's football operation.

"I hate the term rebuilding because it gives people a built in excuse," York said. "What we're trying to do is re-establish our culture and we want to be at a championship level. John Lynch brings that. You can

certainly guess as to who the new head coach is going to be but we certainly believe that the new head coach will bring a legacy of the 49ers, a legacy of great football knowledge and those two should be able to work together in a way that we should have a long run of success. That, to me, is the biggest thing. I don't care about going from 2-14 to whatever the record is this year. I care about 20 years from now when we look back, what did we do together, what did we accomplish over that period of time."

Bill Walsh, Ronnie Lott played big role in shaping John Lynch

By Jenna Laine, ESPN.com

TAMPA, Fla. -- Long before he was known as one of the NFL's most feared tacklers, a Super Bowl champion, a Pro Football Hall of Fame finalist or general manager of the San Francisco 49ers, former Tampa Bay Buccaneers and Denver Broncos safety John Lynch didn't really know if football would be part of his future.

He saw far more success on the baseball field when he was a dual-sport athlete at Stanford.

"My very first at-bat, I hit a home run and I was just kind of like, 'This is gonna work out,'" said Lynch, who fell below the 80 percent requirement and was not voted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame on Saturday. "They liked me. They wanted to find ways to get me on the baseball field there, whereas with football, I struggled to get on the field."

He was drafted in the second round of the 1992 MLB draft by the then-Florida Marlins even though he stayed home from the College World Series for two straight years while first trying to win the quarterback competition and then making the move to safety. It took some convincing from the legendary Bill Walsh, his coach at Stanford, for Lynch to come back to school.

"He had seen enough of me my junior year to really believe I had a future in the NFL as a safety and he wanted me to give it a go," Lynch said. "And that year I played well. I kind of felt like, 'Wow, I can do this.'"

It also took some encouragement from another legend -- safety Ronnie Lott, a future Hall of Famer who won four Super Bowls with the 49ers and was playing with the Oakland Raiders at the time. Lott had connections at Stanford with Walsh and defensive backs coach Tom Holmoe, who was Lott's backup in San Francisco. Lott stopped by Stanford to watch practice from time to time.

"I'll never forget looking over and, on a Mercedes, there was Joe Montana and Ronnie Lott sitting on the hood watching our practice," Lynch said.

After practice, Holmoe found Lynch and said, "Hey, Ronnie would like to talk with you and work with you."

Lynch said, "That's where I first got to know him and he kind of said, 'Look, I know you haven't played much but I'm watching you and you've got a knack for this. You do certain things really well.'"

It was through Lott that Lynch honed a ferocious hitting style that became his trademark, something he felt he had a knack for. With Lott, though, a light came on.

"He talked to me about the concept of 'hitting through people.' He talked about [how] even in the NFL, 99 percent of the guys 'hit to people.' The great ones hit through people," Lynch said. "I never lost sight of that. I was so fortunate because right when I went to that position, here's somebody like that, teaching me that. I was really, really lucky there."

Lynch was selected in the third round of the 1993 NFL draft by the Buccaneers, but it took some time for him to see the field. He sensed defensive coordinator Floyd Peters was being forced by head coach Sam Wyche to play him, and it wasn't until coach Tony Dungy came that Lynch felt like he truly belonged.

"It took a lot of hard work," Lynch said. "It took belief in myself when I felt like a lot of people didn't. It also took some encouragement from the people I really cared about and respected, the Bill Walshes of the world, the Ronnie Lotts -- he had seen me play college ball and saw me in preseason where I got garbage time and at the end of a game -- and he'd call and say, 'Hang in there. You've got what it takes.'"

Lott believes it was Lynch's anticipation of certain plays, the way he could truly quarterback the Tampa-2 defense, that put him in the Hall of Fame conversation.

"He learned the anticipation of, 'I need to be here. I can get there. I can blow up this play. I can take on that guard. I can take on that tackle,'" Lott said, recalling the time Lynch once delivered a hit so hard, he knocked out his own brother-in-law, John Allred, when Allred played for the Chicago Bears in 1997.

"Those are plays that, as a defensive player, you go, 'That's how I would want a Hall of Fame safety to take on a block. That's how I would want a Hall of Fame safety to fill the hole. That's how I would want a Hall of Fame safety to be able to roam the field ... Is the receiver thinking about, 'Where is John?' So those are the things that are part of the eye test."

Lott was right. Lynch became a nine-time Pro Bowler and helped lead the Bucs to victory in Super Bowl XXXVII. Now, Lynch is the new face of the 49ers' front office. He also hopes, after four straight years of being a finalist, that he will someday join Lott in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Twenty-five years after their first meeting, Lott marvels at what Lynch was able to do, becoming, in Lott's mind, one of the best Tampa-2 safeties to ever play the game.

"It's fascinating when you watch a player that you've seen in college and you see some great characteristics of that young man at that time and you sit there and you can see that the potential is there, and then you can see not only the potential, but you can see he has the capabilities of being one of the best," Lott said.

"And then you see him not only be one of the best, you start to see him being excellent at that position. I think striving for [excellence] and getting there and being able to demonstrate that he could do that over a period of time, to me, is probably why he's where he's at right now, being considered as a Hall of Famer."