

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

# TRANSCRIPTIONS



**Head Coach Kyle Shanahan**  
**Press Conference – December 11, 2017**  
**San Francisco 49ers**  
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**Is there an update on CB Ahkello Witherspoon?**

“Yes, it ends up having a sprained knee. MRI was better than anticipated. He'll be day-to-day. We'll see when he comes in Wednesday to have an idea whether he can practice, be limited, or what his status will be.”

**Were you initially afraid it was worse?**

“Yeah. Any time they talk about a knee and stuff, I'm always nervous about it. They said the MRI was encouraging. The fact he's got a chance to play this week, I was encouraged with.”

**In regards to WR Marquise Goodwin, how much can you learn about a guy when you throw him into the fire and ask him to do something he's never done before in terms of being your number one guy because you lose WR Pierre Garçon and guys where he hasn't done that before?**

“You never know until you go through it. I think same with Marquise just for himself. I think he's always believed that he could do that. Just us even studying him on tape, there wasn't a ton of routes you could see him do. His route tree was pretty limited and how he had been used. But, he's a guy who has the ability to do a lot of things. We've challenged him since he's been here, running a bunch of different stuff, moving him to different spots, inside the numbers, which he'd really never been before. He's going to come a long way in his routes and things like that, but to have the pressure week-in and week-out of being a number one receiver, being a number two receiver, just being out there as much as he has been has just been different in his career. I think he's learned a lot about himself, and we've learned a lot about him throughout the year. He's a guy to me who's become more of a pro in a good way as the year has gone on. He just knows how to handle it each day. I think he's done a better job overcoming negative things that happened in the game and rebounding, letting one play move on and go to the next. I think it's really carried over to him getting better too.”

**Have you been impressed with him the last two weeks being QB Jimmy Garoppolo's go-to guy, making big plays in big moments, a variety of different routes and receptions?**

“Yeah, definitely. I think really since the Giants game. He's done some good things for us all year, but when he came out and had those two real big catches versus the

Giants, helped us to our first win, and then he came back and has had two good weeks in a row right now. It hasn't just been on Sunday, which has been the neat thing. We've seen a difference in practice, just how he's carried himself all week. I really feel like he's taken a step forward in the second half of the season."

**Jimmy, just the way he took some hits and still delivered some key passes in that game. What are you still learning about him as you watch him play and things, like taking hits that you can't necessarily simulate in practice?**

"We learn something every time we play with him. Each snap you get. It's nice to have film, two games now, to go off of. It will be nice to have more. We're still learning and will continue to learn throughout the year. We will into this offseason and next year also. I think we protected him very well versus Chicago. Didn't get many blitz looks. Just worked out to be a very clean game. This game was a lot different. We kind of had an idea of that going into it. We definitely were anticipating it to be more like that. It was the first time that we've had Jimmy where he's been under duress like that, and I thought he handled it very well."

**You've talked about the franchise tag in the past. Where is that now? Where's the organization at from his contract standpoint? And as the last two weeks, how has that impacted what you guys are thinking?**

"For me personally, it doesn't impact anything. That's why, that's what I was trying to explain. I thought it was so neat about the situation that I didn't feel that, because of that option, that we had to see something here or there, and we had to do all this stuff. It's been able for us to just try to do things the right way, put him in when we thought he was ready to, not put any pressure on him where he has to do all this to show something. Obviously we're very encouraged with how these two games have been. We'll see what happens here in the offseason when we get together and can assess everything. I definitely don't think that's something he's thinking about at this point, and it's definitely not something I'm thinking about either."

**So, you're not anticipating a new contract to be done before the year is over?**

"Yeah, I would not be anticipating that, yeah."

**In what ways have you seen growth in him since you first saw him here or even in the last two weeks?**

"It's just the experience of it. Everything else is anticipation. So, there's always a lot of unknown. Since he's gotten here, he's handled himself very well. He's worked as hard as you could to get it. There's a ton of unknown, both of us, but the whole building, when you're going into a game. He's only been one place in his career. Everything's a little different, how you warm up, your nightly meetings, how you travel. Just little things are different for people. And I think people in sports and definitely players are creatures of habit. So, all that's been new for him. The Chicago game was a good first experience. I think this game was even easier. I think he had an idea of how a week went, how a game went. I had a better idea of how he handles some situations. I think the game was easier, one, because he had a trial run before it going versus Chicago, and I think he had an idea of how I call plays and how I go through a game. I had a much better idea

of what he was used to. So, I think we were both better in that aspect in this game, and I think we'll continue to be throughout the year.”

**Will one quarterback be enough of a difference maker for a team that's 1-10 to suddenly go 2-0, or is it a lot more than that?**

“I think it's a lot more than that. There's no doubt about that. To put all of that on one person, I think, would be unfair to him and to the rest of the guys. I think Jimmy's played very well these last two games. I think the guys around him have played pretty good too though. I thought we had our best game versus the Giants up to that point and Jimmy didn't play in, and I thought the guys played very well in that game, which allowed our quarterback to play pretty good too, [QB] C.J. [Beathard] versus the Giants. I didn't feel we played very well as a team versus Seattle, and usually the result is the quarterback didn't play as well versus Seattle either. I think we all played better versus Chicago and yesterday against Houston. I think that's not a coincidence that leads to quarterback play also.”

**Getting back to the hits that Jimmy took yesterday, how concerned are you about pass protection considering the defenses you're facing?**

“It's always a concern, especially it was a concern going in the last game, especially when you've got, I mean they've got a very good defense. They've got very good corners. It's tough to get open very fast. Then they have someone like [Houston Texans OLB Jadeveon] Clowney, who's an issue for anyone to block. These three games ahead of us, it's going to be very similar with some of the defenses, but that's part of the NFL. You've got to deal with it and you've got to figure out ways to help. You've also got to know that it's going to be part of the game and we've got to see how you perform to it.”

**Are there certain things Jimmy can do to avoid maybe a couple of these hits, or sometimes that's just the way it is?**

“Yeah, I think at times you can, but that's also what allows people to make plays too. You've got to sometimes take the good with the bad. I think it would be very easy for a guy to take a quick drop, get rid of it as fast as can be. If number one isn't open, just ditch it and throw it away to number two. You could probably end up saying that we had no sacks and we blocked better, but we also might have no first downs and no touchdowns to show for it. There's a fine line on when to give up on a play and when to extend it so you can get off the off-scheduled play. I think Jimmy's done a pretty good job with that in these two games playing, and it's something we'll continue to work on each week.”

**What happened on the interception? It looked like some miscommunication on the coverage--?**

“No, Jimmy just missed the throw, and it just sailed on him. They ended up bringing two to the back, so it was a hot situation. They brought it from depth, so we had a little bit of time to get rid of it and just ended up going to the wrong guy and just sailed it a little bit over him and safety was in a good position to pick it.”

**It seemed like you expected the game to be a little bit dirtier than it was in Chicago. How did you prepare Jimmy for that or if you did at all?**

“Just talk about it. He watches the film. We watch it together and you could see some of the issues. We definitely knew Clowney was going to be a challenge going into the game, especially with how much they move him around so you don't always know where he's going to be. But, you could see it on tape. They have good pass rushers. They have good coverage in the secondary. They're a very good third down team too. So, we knew it was going to be a big challenge going into that. Houston definitely had some good moments, but I thought our guys rose to the challenge pretty well.”

**I have a random one, but just peripherally on the flight back or after a home game, how much are you keeping an eye on what's happening around the league? Headlines, highlights, who did well, do you have time for that, do you make time for that?**

“Not really. I'm a football fan, so usually not on the plane because on the plane I get on there and I watch all three phases, and it usually takes me the whole plane ride to do that, which makes my next morning a lot easier. Then when I get home, before I go to bed, I'll watch whatever highlights are on. Since they stopped NFL primetime with Chris Berman and Tom Jackson, I feel like the highlights don't tell you as good of a story. You only get a couple from each game. So, it's not as good as it used to be. I'm definitely off from that compared to how I was when I was younger.”

**In the past couple of weeks, has Marquise Goodwin performed the way you, become the wide receiver you believed he could become when you signed him, or has he exceeded expectations?**

“No, that's what we believed he could be, and I still believe he can be more. I take it as a, I mean, I never feel people fully arrive. I always feel you can do better. Some people could look at that as being hard on people, but I think it's because I believe in people. I think Quise can always do better, and I think he's showing that right now. And I think his ceiling is extremely high. He has the speed that scares people. He can break down very well. His hands are much better than people realize. He's a tough guy who's not scared to compete and scared to go over the middle. I think he's getting a lot of experience this year that he's never had before. I think so much of this league is how you respond to things. Sometimes people get a lot of experience, and they struggle a little bit, and they get worse because they get intimidated by the situation. It's a little too much pressure. I think Quise has gone the other way. I think the pressure has hit. He's realized it. He's had some weeks where he didn't do his best, and I think he's fought through it and I think he's playing his best game the best he has right now. Hopefully, that will lead into next year. I always say you get better or worse, you never stay the same. I'm really hoping he continues to get better next year.”

**Do you envision him being a starter for you again next season or is that still being determined?**

“We brought him here as a starter at any position. We will always try to get better. That's just how you make your own get better, to take it to another level, and that's why this sport's at the highest level. You're always trying to get people, and that's why players

have got to always try to earn their job each year. I know Marquise serves a huge role for us in the speed he has. That's what attracted him to us the most because when you have that speed, what you can do for a play-action game, people notice it when he gets the ball and stuff, but what people don't notice about a player like that is how much he clears it out for other people. That's something that's always been extremely important wherever I've been in the system we use that we've always targeted a guy who can flat out run. Marquise is really that ideal type of guy. But, there is more to his game than just running. I think everyone's seeing that and hopefully we can continue to build off of that."

**After the game yesterday, Jimmy was asked about making his first home start next Sunday, and he wouldn't go there. He said, "We'll see what happens this week. That's on Kyle. I don't know. We'll find out tomorrow probably."**

"Yeah. I'm going to keep Tennessee guessing also. So, they'll find out on Sunday kickoff."

**Is that surprising to hear? Is he that modest?**

"No, I think he, I think he knows the answer. So, I think he's just playing along with it, similar to how I am also."

**What was the process to taking CB Dontae Johnson out of the game at that point? Was that defensive backs coach Jeff Hafley's call or defensive coordinator Robert Saleh's? Houston Texans WR DeAndre Hopkins didn't have a target until that bubble screen when he fumbled. Was that purely a product of the adjustments you guys made and CB Greg Mabin being in the game?**

"No, it was just a tough drive. We knew going into that game that all of our corners had a huge challenge with Hopkins. He can run. He's very similar to what I was just describing with Quise and someone who has that 40 time to scare people, but can also break down and has the hands to attack balls and can run the whole route tree. That's an issue for a corner, especially if you're not getting to the quarterback very fast. Dontae had a very tough drive. Any time it starts out with a pass interference, then guys lose their confidence a little bit. They were coming after him, and it was just a rough drive for him. Sometimes when you do that, you just want to stop the bleeding a little bit. It was nothing permanent or anything like that. You do it, not just to put all the blame on the kid, but also to help him. We weren't going to for sure put Mabin in the rest of the game. We were going to plan on getting Dontae back in there, but he had to get in anyway when Ahkello got hurt, so he was going to be in regardless. We helped Dontae at times. We helped Mabin a lot when he got in there too. Even sometimes when we did help, they were able to make the play. That happens, but when a player gets attacked like that on one drive, you kind of want to help him, let him get away for a little bit, recover, and not just continue to put him out there on that island."

**How did he respond?**

"He came in and did well. When he came back in, we were cheating a lot of the coverage more to Hopkins at that time, and they weren't able to get to any other guys. I thought Dontae didn't have a bad play after that. Just what I liked about it, he

understood and didn't sit there and freak out on the sidelines, didn't pout. He sat there, understood, and didn't lose it. He waited to see when his next opportunity would come. You never know if that will be the next game. It might be a play later. In his case, it was a couple of drives later. He went out there and still did his job, which is what he's expected to do. He didn't let a negative affect him worse."

**What was that explanation you were giving on your challenge, the fourth and 22 play? Have you ever seen a position player give himself up or have that be the explanation of not being down on contact?**

"No, I was confused on that. That's what they said to me at the time, that he declared himself down. That's why I wasn't able to challenge it, which I think we all saw it differently. And that's what we'll write into them and get an explanation tomorrow on it."

**Just to be clear, you started cheating coverage towards Hopkins after that first drive of the third quarter?**

"No, we did some times before that. We completed a, we had a two-man look, I think, on the first third and long that they had that they completed, which was a double on Hopkins, but they found a way to get it in there. We cheated a lot more once they went there that many times on one drive."

**Do you have any update on whether T Trent Brown will be available for Sunday as opposed to last week at this time?**

"Not really. It's still a lot of unknown for me. I'm not going to go either way with it because it's been back and forth. I really have no expectations with it. Hopefully I'll get more information here in the next couple of days."

**Is it something where you're weighing whether or not he needs a procedure? Can you give any information on what's happening with his shoulder?**

"No, I'm not personally. That's something that he's got to decide on. You know, I go with what our medical staff tells me and whether he's going to be able to play. I know it was bothering him more the week after the Chicago game than the week before, and that's obviously why he didn't play yesterday. I haven't seen him today. I know we'll give it a couple days, and hopefully I'll get more information, and I'll have a better idea on whether we can expect him this week or not."

**What do these last two games mean for momentum for the next few weeks and even next season?**

"I mean, every time we take the field, I think it means a ton. Our guys, I believe we have a lot to play for. We're still trying to, I think I said at the beginning of the year that I remember someone asking me what our record needed to be for me to be happy with that. I didn't give them a number because I didn't go into this year thinking, 'Hey, this is what our record has to be for us to be happy.' I just want to be proud of what we put on tape, and you hope that that will take care of the record. Obviously, it hasn't. We haven't won as many games as I wanted to, but I have been proud of what we've put on tape, especially these last few games. I think we've gotten better. We've continued to fight. I've seen improvement. I really like these last two weeks watching things not go perfect

and our guys still overcome some adversity. You know, we missed a number of big plays there in that first quarter, and some guys to still come back and make some big plays in the second half and in the second quarter. I feel like our team hasn't gone with the highs and lows of the game. I feel like we've played the same recently throughout the game regardless of the score. I think it's really given us confidence. I think we've showed a little bit more of who we are, and I hope to continue this in these final three games. I want to know what we've become and I feel like we've gotten tighter throughout this. I feel like we've gotten stronger, and I definitely feel like we've gotten better. I want to feel that way now, and I want to feel that way in three weeks from now too."

**What do you make of K Robbie Gould making nine over the last two games? Is it easy to take that for granted and say he's a kicker and should go out and make it or whatever or is that something that's pretty special and rare?**

"I think it's pretty special. He's been great this year. My whole career, I had a very good kicker in Atlanta with [Atlanta Falcons K] Matt Bryant. So, he got me a little spoiled my two years there. And then Robbie's doing the same. Most of the time, I'm always wanting to go for it and never considering us in field goal range until we're really inside the 20 or things like that because I just have a lot of scars from my past. Those have changed. That changes because it's real. When a guy goes out there and has been as consistent as he has, then you never think he's going to miss it. If he ever does, hey, that is going to happen once in a while, but Robbie's been so automatic this year, it's given the team a lot of confidence when we get in that area."

**What was your impression of RB Carlos Hyde yesterday? He missed the long pass, but he seemed to run very hard.**

"Yeah, I thought Carlos ran hard, he hit the right holes. I know he'd love to have that pass back. Again, that was a big play that he missed, and it didn't faze him. He wasn't sitting there freaking out on the sidelines, overreacting. He moved on and he came back and made some big plays for us there in the game. I thought [RB Matt] Breida had a hell-of-a game too. I know his numbers don't look like that, but he unfortunately got all the holding calls. A number of his big runs, he had holding calls. I thought both of our backs ran the ball very well yesterday."