

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

# TRANSCRIPTIONS



**Defensive Coordinator Robert Saleh  
Press Conference – October 12, 2017  
San Francisco 49ers  
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**How was LB Reuben Foster running around yesterday?**

“He looked pretty good. He was excited, chomping at the bit to get out at practice. He looked good.”

**Is it just a matter of how he feels today and tomorrow?**

“Going through the entire week. Yesterday. Today. Tomorrow. Saturday even. Same thing with [S Eric] E-Reid moving forward.”

**As far as what he’s been able to do just to stay sharp, what kind of mental reps has he gotten over these past three or four weeks?**

“He’s been out there every day, walk-through, and all that stuff. He’s still getting all those mental reps. And, yesterday he was sharp. Lined up. Got people lined up. It was really cool to see because he hasn’t actually taken a live rep since whenever he got hurt. To see the way he commanded the huddle and the way he got people lined up. It was very encouraging.”

**Would you say that if he’s cleared he’s full-go? You’re not going to hold him back in any way?**

“I’ve got to talk to [head coach] Kyle [Shanahan] about that one.”

**You’ve seen so many different kinds of quarterbacks. What are the main challenges that Washington Redskins QB Kirk Cousins brings to this defense?**

“Kirk, he can spin it. Really, really live arm. He’s very smart. He can make you pay. He’s patient enough to make you pay. He’ll grind you out all the way down the field. If you get too aggressive he’ll take shots over the top of the defense. Kirk is a really, really good quarterback. I have a lot of respect for him.”

**What challenges do those two tight ends pose a defense?**

“Anytime you have weapons, there’s five eligibles on the football field and they’ve got five legitimate ones. It always poses a challenge. Again, football always comes back to winning and dominating your one on ones. It’s a great challenge for the guys on the backend to man up and play ball. We do have awareness of where they are, all five of them. Even that little number 25 out of the backfield. It’s an exciting challenge. Anytime the more weapons you have, obviously, it’s more of a problem.”

**When Washington Redskins TE Vernon Davis was here, the quarterback used to watch for matchups where a linebacker was covering him and if he had that, that was the throw he was going to make. Are they trying to do the same thing, get him so that where he's matched against an inside linebacker?**

"Both tight ends. They utilize both in certain ways to make sure they create mismatches for sure. I wouldn't call that a mismatch, but a matchup where they feel they have a favorable matchup I would say. I don't think they're mismatching against us at all. Kirk is smart enough, he will send the ball. He does play matchups. They're really, really talented on offense so they do create what they feel would be a favorable matchup, for sure."

**Did Foster, how much work did he get yesterday and how much will he get today?**

"He had his normal, I shouldn't say normal load, but he took a good amount of reps. He'll get a little bit more today. I couldn't tell you the exact number, but it was a limited number compared to what a normal starter would take. We'll see if he can take a little bit more today."

**If he's ready to play in the game, will LB NaVorro Bowman remain a starter?**

"Yeah."

**Is Reid in a similar situation, in terms of the reps he's getting coming back from his knee injury?**

"Him and Reuben are on the same program."

**I couldn't help but watch the first 11 plays of that game against Carolina, when you guys had both Reuben and Bowman on the field, the only time this year. I thought they worked really well kind of in tandem. I'm wondering if you have noticed the same thing, that they communicate well and that they complement each other well?**

"For those two, when [LB] Malcolm [Smith] went down they had a good month where they were working together. Defense is so much about communication and working and getting comfortable with the guy you're working next to. They got very comfortable with each other and they were working at a very high level. So, it was very unfortunate that Reuben went down. But, at the same time, they've been in the meeting rooms. Whatever communication they did have, they've been able to make it grow a little bit through meetings. [LB] Ray-Ray [Armstrong] has gotten involved, and [LB] Brock [Coyle] and all those guys. From a communication standpoint it's paramount. Especially in this defense. To answer your question, yes they were working very well together. I would anticipate that they would still work well together."

**Are they kind of a yin and yang? Reuben is so animated when he is out there. He's even said that Bowman is just so calm even when things are crazy. Do you see that kind of opposing personalities how help each other?**

"I don't see the calmness in Bo. I feel a lot of energy and juice from Bo. I think he got after the refs a couple times in the game against Indianapolis. He's got a lot of energy to

him. They're both rages of fury in my mind. To be an effective ballplayer you have to have a lot of anger in you. Whether one shows it outwardly or inwardly, to me it just doesn't matter. They both have the same mindset."

**Ray-Ray Armstrong seems to have improved recently. He's made some big plays and he hasn't made those costly penalties that he was making earlier in the season. What have you seen from him? Is it possible he would still have a significant role in the defense when Foster returns?**

"Ray has done a fantastic job. He really has. Credit to the kid. He's taken all of his reps, it's very important to him. He's done everything he can to minimize the one or two plays that have killed him in the past. He's gotten very comfortable communicating and really, really has a great understanding of what he needs to do down in and down out. It is a challenge to try to find a way to get all those guys on the football field at the same time. As we start getting healthier we're in a good situation with the amount of talent we do have to work with."

**You said last week that when Eric Reid is healthy, that S Jaquiski Tantt has asserted himself to the point where he's going to need to be on the field. Kyle said yesterday that it's going to be a competition. When we asked Eric about it he said he feels like he won that starting safety job in training camp and when he's back he expects to be that starter again. Is that how you see it? How do you evaluate that situation at strong safety over these three practices?**

"Same thing at linebacker. We have a very good problem at safety with three really talented football players between [DB] Jimmie [Ward], Eric, and Tantt. I love the mindset from Eric Reid. He should think that way. I wouldn't expect anything else. Going through this entire week, to even think that far ahead, we just want to make sure he's healthy first. When it's time to cross those bridges we'll cross them."

**Do you have a general philosophy on if a player can lose his job because of an injury or when an injury happens in this case?**

"My philosophy is in line with Kyle's."

**Which is?**

"He can share that one with you."

**It seems like CB Rashard Robinson has been up and down, bad week and then a good week. What do you have to do or what does he have to do as a second-year player to kind of level that out and play at a more consistent level on a game to game basis?**

"It comes back to preparation. There's a difference between ready and prepared. In my mind everyone is ready to go take the field, but it's the ones who are prepared that actually have a consistent level of success. For Rashard, preparation starts in practice. Having deliberate practice every single day. Going out and not taking any rep for granted. That's for the entire defense. To create a consistency so that way we can perform week in and week out. It starts at practice and getting yourself prepared to play a football game. For all those young guys it's the same story. Not just Rashard, but the

D-Line, at the linebacker level, safeties, corners. Deliberate practice is what will help them be successful on Sunday. You can see it. There's some guys that take to it where every rep, just speaking from a corner standpoint it could be run or pass in the practice rep but they're taking the exact same footwork, they've got the same eye placement, they've got the same alignment and they're working their technique. That's how they get better and more consistent on Sunday."

**Do you face as a coach a challenge with him just because he is so emotional that you have to kind of reign him in a little bit?**

"For all of them. For sure. And again, the group is so young that they do need guidance. The cool thing is that there's enough players on this football team that have done it. They've been through the fire. Like Bowman and Eric Reid and [LB] Elvis Dumervil, from a defensive standpoint, even [DL] Earl Mitchell. So, they know what it takes. They know what it looks like. The way they prepare, it's been filtering out to the rest of the guys. It's not a struggle by any means, but at the same time it is a constant reminder that hey we just need to continue practicing in a deliberate way that will help us play better on Sunday."

**It seemed like three big plays against Indianapolis were Indianapolis Colts RB Marlon Mack runs off right tackle where your guys didn't set the edge on that side. I know all the plays were different, but was there a common thread that you saw? Is it a quick fix or is there a quick adjustment that you need to make coaching this week to ensure that you keep a speedy running back contained?**

"That's personal awareness. Understanding who's on the football field and the style of runner they are. There was a distinct difference between him and [Indianapolis Colts RB] Frank Gore and their running style. Frank Gore was one cut and get it up field, 25 was run to the sideline. Again, with a young defense trying to recognize that, get their alignment, get their key, get ready to execute and still recognize who they're actually going against, those are all vital things that they need. He had a very distinct running style, and he did it. We missed the boat on that one. Let's just say that."

**Last week you mentioned you weren't happy with the defense of the short passes to the running backs out of the backfield. Did you see the improvement that you wanted this week in that phase?**

"From the game, the pass game, I don't think they really hurt us in the pass game. Where they got us were broken plays, explosives. Especially in that third quarter, the first three drives of the third quarter. The explosives and the tackling are what did us in. Then overtime of course, again, the same two things. Tackling and the explosives. The explosive play to [Indianapolis Colts WR] T.Y. Hilton. It was much more improved. It wasn't a problem in my mind. Now we've got another thing that we've got to bring awareness to which is of course keeping the ball in front of us and trying to eliminate the explosives and tackling. We've got to get better at tackling."

**Do you intend to keep giving NaVorro Bowman specific series off during a game or cap his snaps?**

“We’d like to give NaVorro a break here and there. The plan going in, we felt like we had a good plan with NaVorro. We’re playing a lot of snaps on defense. It’s like we talked about with the D-Line. They’re playing a lot of snaps. We’re doing everything we can as a staff to make sure that those guys are fresh so they’re there and available for crunch time, so in overtime or four-minute drive or a two-minute, we’ve got all gas and we’re ready to execute the way we need to execute. The one series to give him a quick breather in the first half, quick series in the second half, that was the plan going in so we could have him for those crunch time moments because he is a vital part of this defense. That was the plan and we’d like to continue that. Provided, now if we’re in a game where our snap counts are really, really, down, that’s a different story as the game goes. But, if you’re in the middle of a game and you recognize that you’re taking on a lot of snaps and it’s for sure something that all position groups need to talk about.”

**When Foster comes back and you do that, would Foster move over to the MIKE or how would you--?**

“We’d like to keep Foster playing one position. Having a rookie bounce back and forth, that wouldn’t be doing him a very good justice.”

**The air quality wasn’t great yesterday. Did you notice it affecting anybody at all? It’s not as bad here as it is other parts of the Bay Area.**

“No. I thought the guys did a great job handling it and the energy in which they practiced, I didn’t think it had any effect on us.”

**The schedule was not affected?**

“Not changed.”

**As you know, NaVorro doesn’t love coming off the field. He’s not used to coming off the field. Does that have the potential to get to be an uncomfortable situation? Do you feel like you’ve talked to him and he understands well enough what’s going on?**

“I would expect Bowman to be the most angry human being in the entire world. I would expect nothing else. I would expect him to fight tooth and nail to come off the field and I would expect him to fight tooth and nail to get back on the field. That’s why Bowman is a special football player. That’s why he’s been fantastic his entire career. Like I said, no player wants to come off the field. Nobody. I completely understand where NaVorro is coming from. It is not uncomfortable, because in the end we’re all men, we’re all professions, and we all have a job to do. At the end of the day, there’s no doubt that Bowman will perform at a great level, and all of them, the D-Line included, they’ll all perform at a great level if we can get their snap counts down.”