

TRANSCRIPTIONS



**Defensive Coordinator Robert Saleh
Press Conference – August 15, 2018
San Francisco 49ers
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Going with the layers?

“You know what, hindsight.”

Did you ever get used to this?

“You know, when I was here for six years I did. But, now it’s an adjustment period.”

Can you walk us through what you saw from your vantage point and the practice that DB Jimmie Ward had with Houston Texans WR DeAndre Hopkins?

“You know, it’s a shame it was the first play, a little scuffle. And we’ve made it very clear that if anyone throws punches or if you do anything that will get you ejected from the game, you’ll be done with practice. So, both players were removed from practice. Hopefully they learned it and come back tomorrow and practice.”

Is it a shame that your guys didn’t get to go against DeAndre Hopkins for an entire practice?

“Well, it’s a missed opportunity on a bunch of levels. One, you don’t get to face a guy like Hopkins like you said. But, it’s a trickle-down effect. Now, other people need to pick up Jimmie’s reps. I’m sure on their side, receivers had to pick up for Hopkins. It’s something that they’ve got to be aware of. It’s a real thing when you get ejected in a game, it’s a trickle-down effect all the way through. Hopefully, both sides got the picture, got the message and we can come out here and have a functional practice like we did.”

Is that something that you will have to talk to Jimmie about or have you already?

“No, I’m sure Jimmie is going to be just fine. And [head coach] Kyle [Shanahan] addresses all of it and he takes care of it. Whatever needs to be addressed I’m sure Kyle will take care of it.”

Have you spoken to your player after the scuffle?

“Yeah, it was quick. I know Jimmie. Jimmie is such a big competitor and I’m sure he regrets it. But, hopefully we get him out there tomorrow and it’ll be, I mean, him and Hopkins ended up shaking hands afterwards, anyway, so it was just the heat of the battle.”

Did you talk with the Texans coaching staff about guys being ejected if they fight?

“Kyle handled everything and trickled it down to the staff.”

Is the plan then for CB Richard Sherman just to kind of take it easy this week, maybe ease him back in?

“Yeah, ease him back in. Especially in this heat and all of that. The trainers have a great plan for him. Kyle and everybody has a great plan for him. It hurts him. He wants to be out here at practice, but there’s a bigger picture in mind.”

Is he constantly lobbying you guys to come back?

“Constantly. Kyle had to an inner demon fight with himself to not listen to what Sherm was going to bring to him. Sherm wants to be out here, especially coming on the road and practicing in another environment. He wants to be here. He wants to be with his teammates, and that’s the type of man he is. So, he’ll get his opportunity, but we’re trying to be as smart as we can with it.”

He’s 30, he knows this defense inside and out. Do you like to see that from him? Does that tell you that, ‘Okay, he’s still the same guy he was?’

“Seriously, I wouldn’t expect anything else from him. He’s the same guy. But, you’ll find, at least from my experience, the best players in this league have that same mindset. They don’t want to take a day off. They want to destroy everybody in practice. Every play is a championship play. Every practice is a championship game, whatever it is. He’s got that mindset and I wouldn’t expect anything else from him.”

Big picture, how did you feel your guys did? What signs did you see you were encouraged by and what signs did you see that you needed to tighten up?

“There’s always things you can tighten up. But, I loved the way we competed. Loved up front, guys straining, and just seeing a different run game, seeing a different quarterback, seeing different pass concepts. So, it was really a lot of good things to see and being able to go and watch the tape and just watch it again. The main thing that I want to make sure that these guys get out of this, and I know I beat it like a dead horse, but it’s representing that style and not getting complacent with whatever you have. If you get comfortable in your environment, it leads to complacency. Complacency leads to failure. And so, for our guys to come in here, even though it’s hot, you’ve got a lot of excuses for yourself, but to come out here and compete and I felt like we did.”

Were you encouraged by that two-minute drill drive by your starting defense?

“Yeah, it was good. Even the second group. It was a play that I’m sure our guys are going to want back. An easy concept to defend in the coverage that we were in. We just got a little bit aggressive with it. Good by both groups, just gave up the touchdown and it’s an easy fix.”

Was that kind of the play with DB Tarvarius Moore? It was a good play, bad play, just string together the good plays?

“You know, those are things he’s got to feel. On the first play, he was in great position. He was on top, in position. They came back on a back shoulder the next time because of his style of play being on top. For him, that’s the cat and mouse game he’s got to learn. When is it okay to be on the low hip? When can I stay on the high hip? Just going back and forth and understanding that if you’re on top as much as he was, yeah, they can go back door and back shoulder. A great sequence of events for him to learn off of. He had a really good day off of what I saw with the one-on-ones and team. Excited to get to the tape and see what it looked like.”

What is it like being able to face DeAndre Hopkins and guys like that in practice?

“Any time you get to face a premier player like Hopkins, it’s always beneficial for everybody. Even on the offensive side of the ball, getting to see [Houston Texans DE/OLB Jadeveon] Clowney and [Houston Texans DE] J.J. Watt, it’s just different humans that you get to go face. That’s always beneficial.”

How much has NT Earl Mitchell grown since he was here, or is he much the same player?

“He’s the same. I feel like he came out of the womb a grown man. He’s straight business. He’s got objectives, he’s got goals and he’s a grown man. That’s what Earl is and he’s been that since the first day I met him.”

Did you have any noticeable takeaways of the pass rush? I know that was an area you were looking at going in.

“I felt like we got some good pocket push. Felt we had a great combination of rush and cover. Quarterbacks back there, I’m sure they’re seeing different coverages for the first time going against a new defense. They held on to the ball a little bit and it allowed the pocket to close out on them. That’s the whole style of defense. You’ve got rush that’s got to marry the cover and vice versa. It was good. We saw some good things. And again, we’ll see the tape to verify everything that we saw on the field.”

What was your biggest takeaway from facing Houston Texans QB Deshaun Watson and DeAndre Hopkins, even though DeAndre was ejected early?

“DeAndre, hopefully we get to see him tomorrow. But for Hopkins, in practice he’s not his full self. He’s a scrambler. He’s going to keep things off schedule. They’ve got their read-zone I’m sure they’ve got in their package. So, we’re not getting to see the whole package of DeAndre Hopkins. But mainly, being able to a different scheme in the run game and all that stuff is what’s going to be the most beneficial.”

Earl Mitchell, I guess a lot of nose tackles aren’t signed because they don’t get the big stats or whatever. But, I know you weren’t here two years ago when the run defense was awful. It was much better last year. How big of a role did he have in what you did run defense-wise?

“I get those reports, too. The PFF reports and all that stuff. What people don’t realize is that the nose in our defense, they grind. They keep the double-team off. They keep the linemen from getting up to the linebackers. They do all of the dirty work. They don’t get a lot of fanfare. So, Earl is a big staple in this defense. He’s a clog in the middle. He

gets beat up a lot so other people can make plays, and that's his role. He's a grunt. He's been a big integral part to what we do."