



Transcriptions



**President of Football Operations and General Manager John Lynch
and Head Coach Kyle Shanahan
Press Conference – April 23, 2026
San Francisco 49ers**

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You guys obviously moved down twice. Was that kind of the plan coming in or kind of the way the board kind of fell for you guys?

President of Football Operations and General Manager John Lynch: Yeah, I think it's the way the board fell. There were a couple, a few players, that we would've taken had they been there. That didn't happen. We had done our due diligence probably about this time last week. We started making calls, 'Hey, if we were to get back.' And I think the reason why, I think this was a draft where a lot of people were trying to move back, so you wanted to get ahead. We had a couple deals secured. The second deal was from a team we didn't have secured, but we had made contact with. So, I think we were able to swap a fourth for a third in one deal. We were able to pick up some things to move back three spots. And I think the cool thing about the 33rd pick, it puts you in a really nice, we can kind of reconvene, reset our board, reset our thoughts, and I think it's also a coveted pick as a lot of teams are doing that themselves. So, that's where we're at."

Are you guys still open for business as far as that 33rd pick? And if you keep it, how many positions or how many players, do you already know the guy you're going to take if you keep that 33rd pick?

JL: "We've got a good idea of some names. We're always open for business. You always, I think that'd be foolish not to listen. And so, we will do that, but we have a good idea of where we're going and looking forward to that."

I just wonder what it's like, you've had other nights when you haven't had a first-round pick, but you just didn't have a pick. What's it like for you studying the board, seeing the scouts work, seeing John work and trading out of the first round? As you're watching, what is that like?

KS: "It wasn't bad because that was one of the things that we were kind of hoping would happen. When you look at the guys that we really thought had a chance to be there at 27 and guys we wouldn't move for, I think what happened probably would've been if I was a betting man, probably the second thing I would've thought could have happened. Like we had the guys we really wanted, and we knew there was a good chance, but when they weren't there, we moved back to 30 and the guys that we would've had to take at 30 are still there. So, I look at it as a huge success to move back to 33 when you would've still taken those guys at 30. Now 27, we were hoping for a couple things and we missed those, but we kind of had an idea we might. And to be able to move back two spots or two different times and get all those picks and still take who you would've taken of those spots

who weren't your first choice right away. But, we knew that would be a challenge and we were hoping that we could do that if those guys fell.”

Before you made your first trade, ESPN NFL Senior Insider Adam Schefter announced to everyone that you were looking to trade back. Were you looking for assistance to let everyone know that you were ready to trade back?

JL: “No, I think we had already done that ourselves.”

KS: “We tell all 32 teams when we try to trade back (Laughter). You guys can repeat it. Appreciate it.”

Was Cleveland Browns WR KC Concepcion a guy maybe you would've wanted?

JL: “We liked KC a lot. KC came out here for a visit. We met with him at the Combine. Tremendous young man. He has a great ability with the ball in his hands. Fun player to scout, fun player to watch, fun player to be around. I think Kyle and I, we tag team a lot of these visits when we're with the kids. Really just can't say enough about that young man. I think he's going to have a nice future ahead of him.”

I know you didn't want to give the number of guys you had first-round grades on, but can you just give us an idea of maybe when those ran out tonight and how much maybe that played into the trades?

JL: “Yeah, sometimes they didn't run out until a couple picks before we picked. So, we say a couple that we realistically thought would get to where we were. Now, there were some guys earlier that we would've been thrilled to have, but we had a really good idea that they were going to be gone.”

KS: “And then some guys go there that we didn't think would. There's a couple that, I'll make something up, let's say we had 22 of them, but there was a couple that went in those 22 that weren't those guys, which is why I feel really good about some of the choices still at 33.”

As far as the second trade goes, you pick up a fifth-round pick, you also lose the fifth-year option. Was that something you weighed? Is that fifth-year option valuable to you? How did you decide that one?

JL: “Yeah, you weigh it all. I think again, we've got a number of players that are there. We like the situation to be able to grab a fifth and it gives you flexibility to stay there and pick or move forward.”

I know you're focused on your pick, but at 13, what is your reaction to the Los Angeles Rams taking a guy that isn't going to immediately impact them next year?

JL: “Well, first of all, I think another team in our division, they got a player who is going to have an impact, and I am talking about [Arizona Cardinals RB] Jeremiah Love, a fantastic player. [Los Angeles Rams QB] Ty Simpson is a good football player. I think there was a lot made as to where he would go and what teams would do. It probably surprised everybody, but one thing I've learned over the years is that with quarterbacks people will do those types of things, and they certainly did. So, we'll see.”

Is QB Mac Jones going to be on this team going into camp?

KS: "Yeah, I mean, I'd be really surprised if he's not. It also really surprised me that no one came and offered something today. But, the fact that no one did doesn't make me think someone's going to do something tomorrow and his value has probably already passed anyways."

You mentioned having some interest in guys who went ahead of you. Were you both just kind of content with sitting at 27 and not really thinking of trading up, given only the six picks coming into the draft?

JL: "Yeah, I think with the six picks what it would take to get up, that wasn't something. We were comfortable with enough of the players that were there. There were a few that we said we were going to be patient and if they got there, we would turn the card in. Those guys went, and we stuck to our plan. Like I said, the first deal had been in place for some time provided our guys weren't there, and we executed it."



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Press Conference – April 24, 2026
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We'll start with the last pick first. What was the logic or the thinking in taking a running back before you even take an offensive lineman where you have an opening there at left guard?

President of Football Operations and General Manager John Lynch: “Yeah. I think we talked a lot about staying true to our board and our convictions, and [RB] Kaelon Black was a kid that we just, like you hear this story a lot as the process went, just kept feeling better and better and better. His film speaks for itself. Really hard-running kid, rocked up kid, had an opportunity to visit with him at the Senior Bowl, met with him at the Senior Bowl, and you can't help but love the kid and everything he stands for. You know, people there just talk about one of their favorite kids in the program. A lot of that from the school, from the strength coach, from the offensive coordinator, and then you turn on the film and we really feel like he can help us in a big way and we're really excited to have landed him.”

Not many passes caught this last year. But, he did catch some at James Madison. So, are you confident that he can really fit into the passing game as well?

JL: “Yeah. I think he can handle himself there. I think that's another thing, Senior Bowl, you evaluate everything. Senior Bowl, you turn on his one-on-ones, I was there, Kyle watched it on the film, and the one-on-ones really stood out. So, while he wasn't featured at Indiana, like you mentioned, at James Madison did a little more of that. Think he can have a role there as well and just couldn't be happier to have him.”

As far as WR De' Zhaun Stribling, he's got a reputation as a really good blocker. Is that something that you saw and does that mean that he can kind of step into that WR Jauan Jennings F position?

Head Coach Kyle Shanahan: “Yes, definitely. I think everyone knows how good of a blocker Jauan is and how big he's been for us in that way. So, we have a hole without that. So, this guy definitely could fill that. For me, I don't ever start watching receivers block, it all has to do with the football. And I really fell in love with him with the ball as a route runner, how fast he is, how big he is, how good his hands are and how physical he played with the ball. When you watch a guy with that size and how physical he runs with the ball, you assume he is a good blocker. And then to hear the people who are further along than I was say he is the best blocker in the draft. He has an elite blocking skill. And then to confirm it after that, it was really cool to watch.”

JL: "Guys really quick too, I wanted to start with this, and I failed to do so. [Dallas Cowboys LB] Dee Winters, we made that trade today and that's tough. Dee's a guy who's done a lot for us here. Sixth-round pick out of TCU, but Dee is one of the favorite guys in that locker room amongst his teammates. He's done a lot for us on the field. We just felt like we were in good position at linebacker. And Dallas has been really interested in him for a long time. I'd say the talks probably started with myself and [Dallas Cowboys chief operating officer and co-owner] Steven Jones when we were talking about [DL] Osa [Odighizuwa]. They've stayed on that. We kind of held it off for a while, and as we got there today, we just felt like it was the right thing to do for our team. It's a good opportunity for Dee. I think there's a lot of opportunity for him to shine and just very grateful for Dee's time here and all his contributions he made to our squad."

I do understand past Drafts have absolutely nothing to do with this Draft, but when you guys are talking about we're going to take a running back in the third round, Kyle, you even joked once about when you took Washington Commanders K Jake Moody, can't believe we didn't take a running back in the third round. Does it register with you, like, we haven't had much success doing this in the past?

KS: "Honestly, I forgot about that too until you just said that (laughter), but now I remember everything. No, it doesn't hit us, but it's fun to mess with each other on. But, we don't think it's relevant, but hopefully we have better luck."

With DL Romello Height, he played for four programs over six seasons. So, you had a lot of tape, I'm guessing. Did his get-off improve? What jumped out about his get-off because that's so important with that position with you guys?

JL: "Well, his year at Texas Tech was just a spectacular season. They're a really good football team. You turn on that tape, and we do a lot of evaluation just based on how hard, how relentless does a guy play. We feel like Romello is at the top of this draft in terms of the effort, the tenacity the relentlessness with which he plays with. And we were all in on that. And so, we made a little move to get back from 58. We thought that was a good move, and we were hanging on, we wanted to have Romello there. He lasted to 70 and we made the pick with a lot of conviction. We're really excited to have him. I mean, you turn on that tape, it was [New York Jets DL] David Bailey on the other side, [Carolina Panthers DL] Lee Hunter in the middle, Romello Height, and they were wreaking havoc and that's what we want to be and we think he can help in a big way. He's going to have to come earn it, but he's got a lot of the indicators that we look for. He's got some Gumby-like qualities. He's real loose. And he can get after the quarterback."

To follow up on Romello, he kind of talked about the kind of guy he wants to be for this team, an energy guy in the locker room, kind of a glue guy somewhat is what he said, but then also someone that kind of seemed like he had a really good encounter with linebackers coach K.J. Wright. What kind of guy are you getting out of Romello Height?

JL: "Well, I think we're getting a guy who loves the game. We did have a nice visit. He met with, these poor guys, they're asked who they met with. They meet with a lot of people. When we bring them in, we take them over to TopGolf. And Romello actually came before the TopGolf thing because he had a schedule conflict, but Romello, we had

a tremendous visit. He met with K.J., he met with [defensive line coach Kris] Kocurek, he met with a lot of people, met with Kyle and I, and handled himself really well.”

Defensive coordinator Raheem Morris has had luck with guys like Los Angeles Rams LB Byron Young and Atlanta Falcons LB Jalon Walker. Do you envision a similar role? Can you kind of lay out what you see for Romello in terms of that?

KS: “Yeah, with Romello with me, he was on the ball rushing, so he looked like a defensive end and how he played, and especially being opposite of Bailey. And the way he played, the style he played is exactly what we want. Very relentless. We have a hair on fire grade, and he was the top of it. And just the style that he did. When you're done with the tape and you get to like body type and stuff, he is somewhat tweener like that like someone would say maybe [New York Giants LB] Arvell Reese is or something like that. So, there's lots of varieties you can do with him. Raheem has a ton of experience in doing that. We'll see how he does use him. You see him on the line of scrimmage all the time in college. You've seen him drop before. So, he's a guy you can use in a linebacker role. He is a guy you can use in a rush role. So, we'll see what Raheem does with him. But, I think he's similar to the guys that you compared him to.”

What went into the decision to trade down from 58? There were some pretty good safeties on the board. Were you just locked into Romello Height?

JL: “It wasn't all about Romello at that point, but we just felt like we had a lot of guys on our board there that we still liked. And I will tell you at some point in there, we started hoping that Romello would get there. And we were thrilled when he did.”

What do you make of the fact that he didn't really break out until his sixth year in school?

JL: “He broke out, and we liked what we saw. Everybody's got a different journey. They all do, and you have to evaluate it all, but what we saw in that year at Texas Tech really spoke volumes to us.”

Can you give us a little behind the scenes of running backs coach Robert Turner Jr. and Kaelon Black and how that relationship evolved?

JL: “Yeah, I mean, the one thing, we joke about it, but it just speaks to what makes Bobby Turner great. You know, he lives this stuff. He's got his number two pencil out, one of the last around that still uses that number two pencil. He calls these guys multiple times. And you know, Kyle asked Kaelon about Bobby T and his interaction. He said, ‘I love Bobby T,’ and we all do. And you know, Kaelon's his type of guy. He's a hardworking dude, a hard running dude, and such a great kid. That really is one of my favorite interviews. You know, interviews are just part of the process. On the way to Mobile, I always take a load of guys. I'd watched him in the fall, but really on the way to Mobile studied him and then sat down with him. And I knew about the kid, knew about his background, but really learned who the kid is and how hungry he is and what a bell cow he was for that program, and that program's a pretty special program, what they've been able to accomplish. He came with [Indiana Hoosiers head coach Curt] Cignetti from JMU, and he hit the big time, and he rotated, but they ran the football a lot. They ran it really well, and he was a big part of that.”

Is there anything he said to you that really kind of triggered you to go, okay, this is a great prospect?

JL: "It's nothing they say. I think it's just a feeling you get for the type of person you're dealing with. And then it always goes back to the film. So, you put those together, and I think he presents exactly how he plays and that's always a good thing."

I realize your board won't reflect public opinion. Regarding De'Zhaun and Kaelon where you guys picked them, you didn't feel like you could let them slide farther than that?

JL: "That's where we had them, and we had a lot of conviction on each of them. And you know, De'Zhaun, we listened. There were a lot of calls for 33 because it is a coveted pick. But you know, at the end of the day, our entire building had conviction. And there's a lot to love about the kid. He's a big, strong guy who plays with tremendous physicality, legit speed. To be that size running a 4.39, that shows on tape. It's not just a time that you never see on film. He's got that speed and he shows it. And we love the total package."

You guys have picks at 107, 127, 133, 139, and I don't know if you guys feel like you have a starting left guard right now. Do you believe you either have the starting guard on the team now or can you get that guy with those picks that I just mentioned?

JL: "Well, first of all, you just mentioned the picks we have. We'll see where the draft takes us. We believe we have good options. You know, [OL] Connor Colby is a guy who started six games for us, a seventh-round pick from Iowa last year. We like the progression that Connor had. We like where he's at, how he's looking. As he enters year two, you know, year one to year two is always a big jump. And we hope to get that jump from Connor. We went out and added some competition with [OL] Robert Jones and [OL] Brett Toth, two guys that have started games in this league. And Brett has been more of a center, but we believe that his skills translate to give him a chance at that left guard. And so, we have options there and we're excited about those options."

You said after the season you probably needed to add speed on offense, or it would be nice to. When you were thinking about wide receiver, was that kind of a must-have quality when you were looking at wideouts?

KS: "No."

High on the list?

KS: "Nope. I don't think I've ever really had a must have. I have preferences. You always prefer speed, but just because you might not have as much speed on your team as you want, it doesn't mean you just draft the fastest guy possible. I've done stuff like that in the past and you try to balance things out to make it perfect and when it's said and done, you're like you know what would make us better? Taking the best football player. They come in all different shapes and sizes. I think we were fortunate to get a guy who could really run. The main thing is how he plays overall. Speed is a big asset of his game, but it's not the reason we drafted him. It's one of many."



Transcriptions

**President of Football Operations and General Manager John Lynch
and Head Coach Kyle Shanahan
Press Conference – April 25, 2026
San Francisco 49ers**

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Opening comment:

President of Football Operations and General Manager John Lynch: “I do want to thank I want to thank the entire crew. I want to make a couple shout outs. [Player personnel coordinator] Jessi Seumalo, she does the logistics on all the travel of all these guys as they come in and out. The Stribling family was here today, and it just made me remember that. I also want to thank [senior personnel executive] Kwesi [Adofo-Mensah], [assistant general manager] Brian Hampton and [president of 49ers enterprises and EVP of football operations] Paraag [Marathe]. You know, we made a few trades in this thing, I think five in total, and those guys were awesome, kind of working their way around the league, allowing us to go back, come up and make a lot of calls to explore other opportunities. And start with that and then open for questions.”

Let me ask about one of the guys that you drafted today. LB Jaden Dugger seems to bear a lot of resemblance physically to his linebacker's coach now. Yeah. I mean, was that kind of discussed when you were talking about him, and what is your vision for where he might end up playing?

JL: “I actually was looking through my phone after we drafted him, I saw something. I said, [head coach] ‘Kyle [Shanahan], Barrows is pretty perceptive because I remember a draft meeting where [linebackers coach] K.J. [Wright] was becoming extremely convicted on the young man.’ And I said, ‘wait just a second, throw up K.J.'s card.’ We got this cool tale of the tape. And I said, ‘you're trying to draft yourself [laughs].’ And I think he was, and if we come anywhere close to that, it'd be a really good thing. Dugger was a cool prospect, interesting story. Went to Georgetown as a safety after two years, goes to Lafayette and is playing kind of an edge this year, they moved him to linebacker, plays some over the slot. So, 84-and-a-half-inch wingspan, 35-inch arms. Really intriguing dude. We just want to get him in the building. I think there's impact he can make right away, but then development that we really believe he can be a really fun player to work with and a really impactful player for our team.”

Do you see him on the strong side? He mentioned MIKE.

JL: “Yeah, he can play some MIKE. I think he has the aptitude to do that. I think long term; the length allows him a lot of different avenues to contribute both at the WILL and the SAM. I mean, it's just kind of a lot of versatility that he brings to the table.”

You guys did not draft a safety. Is that a vote of confidence for the guys you have? And how do you see that room right now?

JL: As for not drafting a safety, there were some guys that came off and, look this thing's still going on, we've got some free agents and all that. We've got a group that we really do like. But kind of the way the board fell, it just didn't work out. And love what we were able to add. The work's not over."

How do you see OL Carver Willis fitting in? I know he played a lot of tackle in college. Do you see the traits that could move him inside? And would he be in the mix now for that left guard spot?

Head Coach Kyle Shanahan: "Yeah, we'll start him off inside. See if he can do it there and give him a chance to try to earn that spot."

Can I ask the dreaded question of any WR Brandon Aiyuk updates now that the Draft's about done and what your plans are with him?

JL: "No new update right now. We're available. Give us a call. And like I said earlier, I think it's the prudent thing to do. He's an extremely talented player. He's been an extremely effective player in our league; situation didn't work itself out here. That's not to say that it can't be rekindled somewhere else. And we'd be happy to do something with anyone if the opportunity presented itself."

But you're not planning on releasing him?

JL: "Not anytime soon."

Your draft board seems to deviate quite a bit from the consensus. Why are you confident with that given your track record drafting the last few years? It seems like it leads to you making reaches.

JL: "Well, I appreciate that you think that, depends on whose consensus. We got consensus in this building. That's the that's the consensus I care about."

You mentioned Kwesi. Can you kind of illuminate what his role was in this draft process? And I think you had mentioned that after the draft you could settle on a title or what would be next for him? Is there anything there in terms of that?

JL: "I mean, Kwesi's a guy, I think I'd put it in the same vein as [personnel executive] Ethan Waugh. Both were here, both valuable members of our front office, both guys that Kyle and I and everybody here valued. And so, they went elsewhere in different roles. Those opportunities came to an end, and we were presented with an opportunity to bring them back and we jumped at the opportunity to do both. So, both those guys will settle in, be a part of us going forward, and we're really happy for that."

With OL Enrique Cruz Jr. obviously later round offensive tackles don't generally project to be eventual starters necessarily. What qualities does he have that would suggest that he could maybe develop into something?

JL: "Yeah, Cruz, is a guy that throughout the process we became very intrigued with. [Assistant head coach/offensive line] Chris Foerster went out, worked him out, and I think that was a big step for us. You're looking at a guy that amongst all the offensive linemen,

had the fastest 20 time, that has the highest vertical jump, the highest speed of any of the offensive tackles in a game. Now, is that all valuable for an offensive tackle? We'll see, but it speaks to the type of athlete he is. And we had a good feel on him. We did more work and got to a point where we think he's a tackle. We think he may have guard flex, but we're excited to add him to the to the offensive line group to add some competition."

What'd you guys see in DL Gracen Halton?

JL: "Plays the style that we like to play. Plays in the opposing offenses' backfield, attacking style, team captain, really impactful player. And you talk to the people at Oklahoma; they rave about him. We're really surprised he lasted that long and really thrilled to pounce on him when he got there."

Now that you have these eight picks, they're the responsibility of the coaching staff. When you look at these players, what's realistic to expect from this Draft class as rookies as far as starters, key contributors on that 53-man roster?

KS: "I'm always hoping that we got a chance that all these guys make the team. That's kind of the goal with all your draft picks. You go in with six and you can find a way to get eight. If we can find eight guys to make our 53, you get a lot better. Now, I think starting with free agency, how free agency went, I think that's going to be a huge challenge. That's why you get in some spots and you're like, 'man, I really want to take this position.' But the best available here, I don't think could beat out who we have. Whether you want to get better or not at the position. It doesn't always show that way. And I think we really did good in free agency. So, I think it'll be a challenge for all eight of these guys to make our team. I think we have a chance for a couple guys possibly to start or have a chance to start. And I think a number of these guys can be a big part or have a chance to start two years from now when you have some unrestricted free agents that we lose. So overall I hope all eight guys just contribute."

I think you guys picked up one pick for next year with one of these trades. How much did the 2027 Draft, it's already got a reputation as being a really good draft. Did that play into your process when you were doing your board this year and going through the draft this year? Was it a point to try to pick up picks for '27?

JL: "Yeah, there's a lot of indications that next year's draft is going to be strong. I think certainly at the quarterback position which often can kind of push a lot of players back. And so, we'll see. I think there was thought early this year that that would be the case. And so, these things are kind of always fluid. But the opportunity to add a pick for next year presented itself at some point. It did on a couple other occasions. We took the one opportunity and that's nice to have. We're happy to have added that and just kind of made decisions as they came. In most instances we were happy with the players we had, and we decided to stay and pick."

KS: "I think that was one of the coolest things with this draft, just so you don't reach on somebody. If there's somebody you know you're going to take at that spot and your consensus or what all your homework from around the league, not necessarily like Twitter or media stuff, just like the things you investigate and when people are going to go. And if you're going to take someone who your think's the best player but you don't think they're

going to go until like 15 picks later, 20 picks later, it's always a huge risk because you never find out when they're going to go if you take them there. But times that we did feel that way, at 27, at 30 and you're able to move back and create stuff later. I forget what it was, but we got a sixth-round pick for next year and we don't have a sixth-round pick for next year. And we were able to still get our guy, I forget what we moved back to, whatever that was, but the guy we would've taken, we got 15 picks later, and you pick up a six for next year where we had a hole or the guy we would've taken at seven, you moved to 30, to move to 33. And so, all that stuff was really cool to get the guys that you want but also find a way to get eight players when you only had six bullets. And also, to gain a draft pick for next year, which sometimes you trade before the trade deadline, I think we have in the last couple years. And to get these guys that we had, it was really neat."

I want to get your opinion on 49ers RB Kaelon Black and what you saw from him and how you can picture him in your offense.

KS: "It always starts with me with just who's the most natural running back. I love third down backs, all the pass game stuff that people can bring, but when it just comes to running the ball, you need to have more than one starter. We've gone through a number of years here where we've been through at least four backs. Last year was one of the abnormal years where, and it was awesome, but our starting back was able to stay healthy. Usually, it happens a lot, where it's not just the one, it's the two. We've gone through four a number of times, and so, what he could do as a true starting running back is what I liked. If you ever had to give him more carries, could he hit the right hole? Can he move the chains when you only block it for three, can he get five? The physicality he ran with, how he broke tackles when he did get into open space, how he didn't sit there and stutter his feet, he just broke to open spots and got yards. And then what he did at his pro day. When you see a tough, hard-nosed runner who ends up running the 40 that he did, to know what else is in his body for more explosiveness and stuff like that. You know, they didn't throw him the ball a lot, but when you watch his Senior Bowl, you watch his older tape from his other school, you see that he has that skillset that you can really develop and you got a guy you can win with."

With DL Gracen Halton, he's a guy that transitioned from end to inside early in his time in Oklahoma. How much did his get-off quickness from that background being outside, jump off the tape playing inside?

JL: "Yeah, it's a good point. That's really what you see with him, an extremely explosive player. And I think it goes to, like, you look at everything in the process, most of all the film, but then you look at his testing. He's over 36 inches in the vertical jump, and that translates to the film that you watch. Boom, he's off the ball. He's in the opposing team's backfield. That's just who we kind of want to be, and so it really translated well. And so, I don't know where it came from but we're glad he has it, and it fits really well with what we do. We think he's going to be a great addition."

All eight picks seemed to make a favorable first impression when they talk to us in the press room. As you've gotten into this longer and longer, is personality and character something that maybe you guys lean into a little bit more than you even have in the past?

JL: "I think the longer you do it, you look at the data, you look at the background and our history, the history throughout football, and there's no absolutes. It's one thing Kyle always says that I really believe in. But those things matter. The NFL's hard. It's tough. It's long. It's tiresome. You're going to be challenged and who has the mental fortitude, the mental toughness to fight through that? The way we do things is tough. We're going to have a lot of fun, but we're going to work really hard. And so, I think what translates is guys who have those qualities, and that's something I think we've always coveted. You're right, probably over time, you covet it even more."

As far as the Dallas Cowboys LB Dee Winters trade, does that speak to LB Nick Martin at all and his readiness? Do you expect him to be part of the offseason program and OTAs and things like that?

JL: "I think it speaks to that whole room. We had gotten up there in numbers. We had a team who was very interested in a player. They were kind of, I won't say aggressive, but they just stayed on it. And it makes you kind of look at things. Dee was going to be a free agent after this season. We liked our numbers. We thought we would likely draft a player in this draft, and we wanted to have the opportunity to do that. And Dee got a great opportunity with the Cowboys. And so, when all those things matched up and the compensation was right, we made that move."

And has Nick been taking part in all the activities?

JL: "Yeah. Nick's here and he's working hard and working great."



Transcriptions



WR De’Zhaun Stribling
Press Conference – April 24, 2026
San Francisco 49ers
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Where are you right now, and who did you spend the draft day with?

“I’m currently in Hawaii, down here on the west side. Spent the whole draft here with all my family and friends. Really just a little tight circle.”

Did you have a did you have an inkling that the 49ers were this interested in you, and how do you see yourself coming out to this team?

“Yeah, I definitely had a little communication in this whole process. But very excited to be here, very excited to come in and work, contribute however I can and just help the team win.”

How familiar are you with WR Mike Evans, their newest acquisition during free agency?

“Yeah, always been a fan of him growing up, so I think it's a beautiful thing that I'll be able to share the receiver room with him and learn off of him.”

How do you see your skillset fitting in with head coach Kyle Shanahan’s offense and how that passing attack works?

“Yeah, so I'm a very versatile guy. I can do a lot of things and also block at a high level. So, very excited to go out there and contribute in the pass game, but also the run game.”

Did you meet with president of football operations and general manager John Lynch and Kyle Shanahan at the Combine, and what were those conversations like if you did?

“No, I haven't met with them yet. First time hearing from them, so excited to know more about them and have some more conversations.”

As you went to bed last night, were you thinking I could be the first guy off the board tomorrow?

“You know, I was ready at all times. Couldn't really sleep last night, you know, kind of just waiting up for the moment, but very excited and very blessed for it.”

To follow up on that, what was the moment when you heard your name called?

“Oh, just a surreal feeling kind of just feeling all the emotions all at one time. How I'm very happy to celebrate with me, all my family and all the people that helped me get here.”

If you could elaborate a bit, what's your message to the Faithful and 49ers fans all over the world?

“Yeah, I'm excited to be here, excited to work and excited to do what I can to help us win.”

Were you surprised the 49ers picked you or did you know there was interest there?

“I believe there was some interest, but it's always a surprise and it's always a blessing. In the Draft, you never know what can happen. So excited for all the opportunities.”

Growing up in Hawaii, did you notice 49ers fans just around? It seems like there's a lot of them there in particular.

“For sure. Being in Hawaii, this is a big thing over here. Everyone is a Niners fan, so definitely happy I can put on and represent over here.”

As you come to this team, what do you know about the offense and the supporting cast behind or around QB Brock Purdy?

“Yeah, so have a great offense, have a lot of playmakers on the offense. A lot of guys who can do different things, so I'm just very excited to come in, fit in and just kind of just make my little mark.”

What are the benefits of playing in three different schools, three different systems and now coming here?

“I learned a lot. I learned a lot of offense, learned a lot of ball, ran different types of offenses, concepts, so kind of just feel very ready, very positive about everything with my learning skills and everything I can recall.”

How would you define your dream of an NFL career?

“You know, just really try not to put too many expectations on anything, just kind of getting in, competing at a high level, getting on the field early and just contributing to the team however I can.”

Obviously, you're coming in and you have your perspective on learning from everyone that you'll be playing with, but where do you feel like your skillset is the strongest that you will immediately be able to show this is the impact that I can make with the 49ers?

“Yeah, my physicality, my run after catch and having reliable hands. So, all those three things kind of fit into one and kind of just being there for the quarterback and being there for the team.”

You probably haven't had a chance to think about it a lot, but what similarities do you see between Louisiana State University Head Coach Lane Kiffin's offense and what Kyle Shanahan runs in San Francisco?

“Yeah, a lot of similar concepts, trying to get the receivers open, but also having a big part in the run game with the receivers blocking. So very excited for the opportunity and very blessed to be here.”

Before today, did you have a favorite NFL team? Is there a comp out there, a wide receiver that you've patterned yourself after?

“Yeah, I haven't really had a favorite NFL team, growing up in Hawaii, but I've always liked watching [Los Angeles Rams WR] Puka Nacua's game. I'm a big fan of him and also loved watching [Pittsburgh Steelers WR] DK [Metcalf] growing up. So, very excited to be in the league now and compete with all these guys and also learn from them.”

Well, with DK Metcalf being an Ole Miss product, do you have a relationship with him? Have you learned to play with him or train with him at any time?

“Yeah, I had some training sessions with him back at Ole Miss, just catching balls and stuff like that. So, I've just been able to ask him questions and get some feedback from him.”

Do you have a relationship with San Francisco 49ers WR Jordan Watkins who the Niners selected last year, and then were there any conversations with 49ers Hall of Fame LB Patrick Willis at all?

“Yeah, I talked to J-Wat a little bit since I've been here at Ole Miss. But that was really it, kind of surface level for the most part.”

How often do you go back home, having spent a lot of time on the mainland and throughout your college years?

“Yeah, I normally come back home once a year, if that. Always in the summer, sometimes after the bowl game. Whenever I'm home, I really try to take advantage of it, relax a lot, stay at the beach, just get as much sunlight as I can.”

So, you've got a lot of family there?

“Yes, I still have a whole bunch of family here.”



Transcriptions



DL Romello Height
Press Conference – April 24, 2026
San Francisco 49ers
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How much contact did you have with the 49ers before? Is this a surprise to you?

“No, sir. It is not a surprise. I kind of felt it, and I’ve been having that feeling all week, that it was going to be the 49ers, and I was telling my agent the whole time that it was going to either be the Colts or the Niners, and man, thank God that it was the Niners.”

Why were you so certain the Niners were one of the teams? What about them?

“It’s crazy. I had a dream about it. I had a dream about it. And it wasn’t like exactly the Niners, but it was the Niners colors and man, look at God.”

What were your conversations like pre-Draft with the Niners?

“We talked at the Combine and that was it up until the 30 visit, I got up with coach [linebackers coach] K.J. [Wright], and he was just telling me about the scheme and how they’ll use me. And man, it was a great feeling. Like I just felt it after that 30 visit, I felt that this was my home.”

Obviously, this is an uncertain time for everyone going through the Draft process, and then you have a dream that you’ll end up with the 49ers. How does that kind of make you even more certain that you are, where you feel like you’re supposed to be now stepping into the next stage of your career?

“It’s just like everything happened for a reason. I was expecting to go a little earlier, but I was just thinking like, ‘God got me.’ Like, he’s going to put me in a place that I need to be in, and we’re going to thrive. It’s a huge blessing that I’m with the Niners because we’re going to go win. We’re going to win Super Bowls.”

The Niners often emphasize the first step, get-off, for their defensive ends. Can you describe just how that’s come along for you over the last six years in college?

“The get-off, it was key to my game, and it was like something I emphasized when trying to perfect my craft. Whenever I’m hitting the lab, it started with my get-off. Every drill was a get-off drill. It started with get-offs and even with my position coach at my previous school at Texas Tech everything started with get-off. Even at the school before that, Georgia Tech, it was everything started with get-off, and the get-off is the key to the pass rush. You got to have a great get-off. So, I just emphasized that and continue to work on it. And I’m not going to say I perfected it, but it became a huge deal when I continued to work on it.”

How familiar are you with defensive coordinator Raheem Morris and how he's used guys like you that fit your description at those previous stops?

“Yes, sir. We talked about it on the 30 visit, and I feel like how he is going to use me is a good way because I feel like I can move around, and I'm a little versatile, so I feel like I could play the MIKE. I can go to outside linebacker, I can go to true standup, humbly, but I feel like he is going to use me in a great way.”

Do you look at Atlanta Falcons LB Jalon Walker and Los Angeles Rams LB Byron Young? I mean, are those good sorts of comparisons to what you'll be doing in this defense?

“I'm not sure what the Rams do defensively, like scheme wise. But I see that they move they use Young in many different ways. So, yeah, probably.”

I just want to clarify it was K.J. Wright who you met with?

“Yes, sir. Man, that's a great coach. I felt his energy. Man, we're going to do some special things together.”

I'm sure you've heard the stick out like a sore thumb stat for the 49ers was 20.0 sacks, and you're coming in as a guy that can play the edge. Can you help them with that?

“Yes, sir. Humbly, I will be able to help them with that.”

How familiar are you with DL Nick Bosa and what he does on the field?

“Man, Nick Bosa is a beast. I can't wait to play on the other side of him. Whether it is right beside him or behind him. I can't wait to play with Nick Bosa. We're going to wreak havoc.”

How did it help you playing opposite New York Jets DL David Bailey this past season?

“Man, playing opposite of David Bailey was a huge privilege because that's a great athlete and he worked his tail off. He deserved everything that came his way. David was an even better person, and he lived in the building. He continued to work day-to-day, first one in the building, last one out of the building. That's what I said about David. David is a great, great athlete.”

Did all your different stops help you to be able to come to another stop and assimilate to a new defense?

“Yes sir. I feel like I played in many different defensive schemes. I feel like what we talked about, I feel like this is the perfect scheme for my ability and my skillset.”

Do you feel like you're already at the playing weight you want to be at? Or do you see yourself putting on some pounds?

“No, sir. I see myself putting on some pounds.”

You talked about how you had a dream that you got drafted by the Red and Gold, but what was your process before that? Did you do like a lot of praying? Was there

somewhere that you wanted to end up or were you just going to let God work it out?

“I was just going to let God work it out. I just put it in God's hands; there is nothing bigger than God. He is my Lord and savior, and when I actually started praying to God and getting on my knees more, he opened so many doors for me. And man, that's all I did. I got on my knees and prayed and just prayed. I prayed throughout the day and man, it happened.”

And now that you kind of opened this door into this point of your career, what do you expect to be the biggest impact that you make starting out here as you grow with the program?

“I haven't really thought about that. I just want to contribute how I can contribute. Like, you know, I just want to bring energy to the building. I want to bring that natural energy to the building. I want to make plays, but that's going to come with work, so I have to work when I hit the building. And nothing is going to come easy, and I know I have to put in a lot of work to go in and actually work my way to that starting job.”

What's the key to beating pass blockers that may outweigh you by 80 pounds in the NFL?

“Speed and playing chess, playing with the Tackle's mind. You have to switch the game up. If he has some type of advantage on you. You have to play with his mind, and you have to switch the game up and get him uncomfortable.”

What team did you follow when you were growing up and who do you watch when you look at the NFL film?

“The Broncos because of [former Denver Broncos WR] Demaryius Thomas. That's my cousin, you know, and he's from out of Dexter, Georgia and went to West Laurens [HS]. He was a huge idol to me, and I looked up to him like no other. And he's the reason I feel like I've had success in my career.”

Are you able to go into a little bit of detail as to what the conversation was between you and Coach K.J. that helped you to really feel like you were connected to him as a coach?

“So, Coach K.J., when they brought me in, he told me straight up. He didn't hold back on anything. He told me straight up how they're going to use me, and how I was going to be used in the scheme. And man, I just felt it. Like I said, I felt Coach's energy, and it was a natural attitude, and he wasn't trying to scare me or anything. He just told me how I was going to go and I just felt it. I was like, man, I'm ready to work with this guy.”

You guys played Utah last year twice, and they had two first round picks in Cleveland Browns OT Spencer Fano and New England Patriots OT Caleb Lomu yesterday. How do you feel going against those guys and tackles and guards in the Big 12 or your local area for the next level?

“Yeah, I feel like Spencer Fano was one of my toughest challenges this year. He's a great, great athlete and you could tell his film study is wonderful because of how he came and approached the game. He switched it up, like he showed me things that I didn't see on

film when I played him. So, I feel like playing against guys like Spencer Fano prepared me well for the League because man, he's going to be super special when he gets to the league."



Transcriptions



RB Kaelon Black
Press Conference – April 24, 2026
San Francisco 49ers
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Any inkling this was coming, the 49ers?

“I had some talks, but I had no idea it was coming. It is just, it's a dream come true to be able to be in the NFL now and be on the team that I've also looked up to growing up.”

What are you looking forward to most now that you're with the 49ers?

“Man, just learning and growing from, from guys like [RB] Christian McCaffrey and even [Running Backs Coach Robert Turner Jr.] Coach Bobby T. I had some contact with him in our Zoom meetings and things like that. And I just feel like being a part of a great running back room is one of those things that can help you excel and become a better player. So I'm just truly humbled and just very excited to get going.”

How many times did Bobby T. call you and text you?

“I can't even put a number to it. I just love him as a coach, and I could tell how excited he is. Just the way that we talked and interacted, it seemed like we've been in contact with each other for a long time.”

How does the outside zone scheme of these guys run a lot fit with your running style?

“It's one of those things where it is just a style that I'm comfortable with. We ran a lot of outside zone at IU, even back to my days at JMU. So, running outside zone, I feel like it's going to be even more of my bread and butter now.”

I know there was a lot of buzz about you sleeping in Chicago. Can you just take us through that? I know we haven't really gotten your perspective. What have you learned throughout the draft process?

“Yeah, so I was pretty much coming from Vegas on a visit and got stuck in Chicago because of a lot of rain. And then, I think Cincinnati was around a five-hour drive away, and the next available flight wasn't until 1:00 PM the next day, so I pretty much would've missed the visit. And they said we're just going to get you guys an Uber. We got in the Uber, took the ride, and by this time it was probably like 9:00 or 10:00 AM when we finally got to Cincinnati. So yeah, we were in the airport for a long time, but it's just a testament to character. Doing whatever, going through whatever to make things happen. And I feel like that's also a character trait that I carry in my life as well.”

What do you think that you can take from being a teammate with Christian McCaffrey?

“Just how to be dynamic. We all know that Christian McCaffrey is a one thousand/one thousand guy easily. And I just feel like being under a guy like him is going to be special. I'm truly humbled to be able to work with a guy like him, someone I've always looked up to, even back to his days at Stanford. So, I'm just really excited to get to work with him.”

I noticed there haven't really been a lot of receptions for you the past couple of years. You had more receptions at James Madison under the same head coach. Was that a part of your game that was underutilized the last two years? Is it something that you have and just haven't done or a part of your game that you're going to watch Christian and take it all in?

“Honestly, it's one of the things where I'm going to take it all in. It kind of got schemed out being at IU. We had some great receivers like [Indiana Hoosiers WR] Elijah Sarratt, [Indiana Hoosiers WR] Charlie Becker, and [Indiana Hoosiers WR] E.J. Williams [Jr.], and [New York Jets WR] Omar Cooper [Jr.] as well. So anytime [Las Vegas Raiders QB] Fernando [Mendoza] was throwing the ball to those guys, they were catching them. So, it wasn't like we couldn't do it as running backs, it was making sure we stayed on it and made sure we stayed focused, and it was always there.”

What's the most important thing you learned at Indiana going all the way through?

“Honestly, how to build a winning program and a winning culture. Being under Coach [Indiana Hoosiers Head Coach Curt] Cignetti for so long has taught me a lot and I'm truly blessed to be coached by him for such a long time. Great team building, having a great locker room, no cliques, and everyone just being focused on the same common goal regardless of what anyone says on the outside.”

You're going to be reuniting with DL C.J. West and QB Kurtis Rourke. What are your feelings on that? And was there ever a world where you thought this was possible?

“Man, I didn't even realize it until now. My boy, C.J. and Kurt are still out there, so I'm like, man, it's definitely going to be exciting. Like I said, I'm just truly humbled, truly blessed, and I don't even know what to say. Like, I'm glad to be back with some winners again.”



Transcriptions



DL Gracen Halton
Press Conference – April 25, 2026
San Francisco 49ers
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Where are you right now?

“I'm out here in San Diego, California.”

What's your background as far as which teams you rooted for growing up?

“Yeah. I was a Cowboys fan, with my dad and then, right when I got to high school and stuff, I really just didn't have a team and, was just watching the NFL.”

Did you have a sense that the 49ers were circling you in the run up to the draft?

“No, I didn't. I didn't expect the 49ers, but it's a blessing just getting the call. Knowing that I'm going somewhere, having somebody that believes in me, so I'm ready to get to work.”

What was your experience with Oklahoma like, how would you summarize it? How you developed as a player?

“Yeah, it was great. Going in freshman year to senior year, had a lot of things to overcome. I did it. I'm glad. I was at the right school to do what I needed to do. And I had a great experience.”

So many players now are transferring. What does it say about you that you stayed four years at the same spot?

“Yeah, man, just talks about my heart, my mindset what it's like when things get hard, you got to overcome. When adversity hits you, you got to find another way to overcome what you need to do. So, you know things got harder in Oklahoma, I just kept on going, had the horse blinders on and kept on moving forward.”

You're talking about adversity. Can you share with us what you're talking about?

“Yeah, just like not playing my freshman, sophomore year. Going in from high school, wanting to play right away. I moved from D-tackle, so I had to learn all the techniques, everything else to get on the field, and I just worked at it, worked at my game. I got on the field and did what I do.”

Why was it important for you to be a team captain?

“It was very important, just preaching what my head coach is saying in the locker room. Having guys that believe in you and that you can lead a team knowing you have guys that are watching you from behind and you're making the right moves, just guiding the team to where you want to go.”

Do you recall having much interaction with the 49ers during the Draft process?

“No, not at all. No, I probably talked to them once or twice. We had the Senior Bowl and the Combine, so in between there for sure.”

Do you remember anything about that meeting?

“No.”

What do you think about their defense and their defensive style?

“I know that they attack, they're hungry, got some hungry guys on the side of the ball that's ready to go make plays. They just added one more.”

Does that suit you, their full speed ahead style from the inside?

“Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Get off that rock. Go make a play.”

Is 49ers DL Osa Odighizuwa a player you watched the last few years? How familiar are you with him?

“Yeah, just one of the guys that adds equity, so, been watching him for quite a while. He's explosive and can get off the ball to make plays.”

Is there a defensive tackle in the league today that you kind of pattern yourself after or see a lot of yourself in?

“No, sir. Myself, Gracen Halton.”

Well, tell us about Gracen Halton. What do you bring to the table?

“Yeah, explosive, hunger mindset, wanting to go make a play and just having fun. Really explosive, having that mindset where it's a dog-eat-dog world. You know, dogs prevail, you have to go make it, have to go get off that play.”

You're described in the draft writeup as a fan favorite at Oklahoma because of your energy and your enthusiasm. Where does that come from and is that something that you sort of feasted off of from the crowds and fans?

“Yeah, no, I'm just having fun. That's football. It's fun to me. I'm going out there, doing what I love, so that's just what comes with it, having fun with the game.”

What was the biggest learning curve for you, moving from defensive end to D-tackle? Is there any part of your skillset that you think benefits you, even in that transition to inside?

“Yeah, really just learning the different techniques. I feel like it's given me a better way to, come from being a defensive tackle, just knowing two positions. Just knowing that I can rush from a five, can rush from a three, can rush from a two, can rush from a zero. I can rush from anywhere. I make plays anywhere on the line.”



Transcriptions



OL Carver Willis
Press Conference – April 25, 2026
San Francisco 49ers
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Did you did you have any inkling that the 49ers were about ready to take you, or you were on their radar this year?

"I knew I was on their radar, but no, I had no idea that they were about to take me. So, it was a pretty big surprise here at my place. So, just fired up to be a part of it."

How much interaction did you have with them leading up to the Draft?

"Yeah, I did an informal at the Senior Bowl and then a formal at the Combine. I've met with their o-line coach a couple of times when he actually came up to Washington as part of the coaching clinic. A lot of the coaches at Washington have deep relationships with the 49ers, and they model a lot of what we did at Washington off of the 49ers. So, kind of some interesting communication, but it was good."

What's your background at Guard or Center? Is that something that any teams talk to you about moving to those positions in the NFL?

"Yeah, that's something every team talked to me about. So yeah, I'm happy to do it no matter where they need me on the line. I've kind of said this whole time. I just want a shot in a playbook, and anywhere they need me on the line, I'm game. But every team talked about interior."

As you approached the draft and your background at both Tackle spots, what do you envision being the biggest challenge if you were to slide inside?

"It's a different game inside in little ways. Things get on you quicker. Guys are a little bit bigger, so that adjustment I think will be interesting. Then at Center, there's a Center I train with that talked to me, has helped me a lot throughout this process. His name is [Denver Broncos C] Alex Forsyth, and he's been huge. He told me Center is the hardest pre-snap position, but one of the easier post snap positions on the o-line. So, for me, the adjustment to Center will be a lot more pre-snap communication than I'm used to, making the calls and doing all that. That'll be an adjustment, but one I think I'm very capable of doing."

What was the biggest adjustment you made from Kansas State to Washington?

"Yeah, part of it was weight. I put on a good amount of weight trying to stay above that 300 number. That, and then Washington's offense really just freed you up to play fast and play physical. And thankfully, it's the same exact offense that the 49ers run, so I'm very grateful for that. But yeah, it was a more fast-paced, more fun offense, and I think I fit that scheme really well, so I'm very grateful to be a part of that same offense going forward."

Is it a challenge to stay above 300? And if so, what have you learned? What are some of your tricks to doing that?

"For starters, eat. Eat all the time, especially when you're not hungry, that's when you have to keep the calories on. But it was more of a challenge to get there. It hasn't been a challenge to

stay above it, just because once you get there, you kind of know what it takes. So, for me, it's really not that hard to stay above it. I have very scheduled food, and then I stick to it."

What was your Senior Bowl experience like in terms of on the field? Where did you line up and how did you fare?

"Yeah, that was cool. Obviously, that was the first time I really ever played Guard, so it was really fun stepping into that and doing all that. I enjoyed it a lot. I thought I got better as the week went on, which is really all I could have asked for from that experience. That, and getting coached up by some high-quality coaches at the Senior Bowl was huge, so that experience was super beneficial and one I'm very grateful for."

What are your thoughts on sharing a meeting room with T Trent Williams?

"It's pretty cool. He's one of those guys that is an all-time great. He is a legend. Any way I can learn from him, or any part of his game I can learn from, or his process, I'm excited for it. One of the first things I said when I got drafted to my family was, I can learn from Trent. I'm excited about the ability to go and do that."

I'm sure you have some affinity for offensive tackle. When you initially start hearing from the NFL about moving inside, do you initially take any sort of offense to it? Or do you just understand that because of your measurements it is probably going to be happen?

"Yeah, I knew it was probably going to happen. I didn't take any offense by it. There's a lot of guys that have done it before me. You look at [former Dallas Cowboys OL] Zack Martin. Zack Martin is like, probably the best to ever do it. He played Tackle in college. So, I don't think there's anything to be offended by. I'm not a guy that's going to sit there and be like; I'm a Tackle and have a huge ego about it. I like playing offensive line. Where that is on the offensive line, I don't really care. I like playing offensive line, and I like competing, so for me, anywhere along the five is good with me. I'm not particular to Tackle, Guard or Center. Just tell me what to do and I'll go get it done."

Where's home for you? Where are you at right now?

"Right now, I'm down in Chandler, Arizona, which is where my training facility is at. But home is actually Durango, Colorado. It's a small town in southwest Colorado."

What were your conversations with assistant head coach/offensive line Chris Foerster like when you were at the coach's clinic?

"They were good. That's before I really dove into how the 49ers run wide zone. I was kind of still doing it from my old team, if that makes sense, from the team I came from before I went to Washington, and they ran it a little bit differently. So, it was fun talking to him, and we even talked about the Combine. He said it was fun to see you change your philosophy and really buy into how you all run wide zone and that kind of run scheme. So, it was cool talking to him, talking and saying he noticed a huge difference, and he was really fired up to see the difference. So, it was great talking to him."



Transcriptions



CB Ephesians Prysock
Press Conference – April 25, 2026
San Francisco 49ers
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Did you have an idea that the 49ers were trailing you and getting ready to pick you?

“First of all, I want to thank you guys for having me on here. To be honest, I had a Zoom call with the 49ers and that was about it. I had plenty Zoom calls with other teams, and I don't know to be honest.”

What does it mean to you to get that phone call from any team, but the 49ers?

“It means everything to me. It's been a lifelong dream since I was a kid. They could have called me at any point. But yeah, it means everything to me and my family. It's just a blessing. Blessed to be here.”

How would you describe your style of play and how do you see your career unfolding?

“I feel like I'm a long, versatile guy that can get in and out of breaks and transitions and that has the skillset to be one of the greatest corners.”

Did you just see that OL Carver Willis was drafted to the 49ers as well, so you have somewhat of a familiar face in the locker room?

“Yeah, I did see that. That's my guy.”

Did you go up against Cleveland Browns WR Denzel Boston a lot in practice, and if so, how did that kind of help you develop?

“Yeah, I went against Denzel Boston almost every day if not every day. But, it helped me just do different things because he's a really good receiver off the line with his route running at the catchpoint. So, it took my game to another level, just coming out there and competing each and every day.”

A lot of people would see your size and wonder if he has a future at safety, but you made it quite clear you're a cornerback. Has that talk ever been made about your versatility, being able to play both corner and safety?

“Well in college, a little bit. I played a little bit of nickel. I got my first pick, it was in an unbalanced formation. I was at safety and then I kind of rolled over, like toward a half of the field and picked the ball off.”

The Niners play a little bit more zone than man. What do you think is your biggest strength?

“Like I said, I feel like I'm a versatile guy and I can do it all. I feel like if it's press-man, or even off in zone coverage, cover-two, cover-three, cover-four, I feel like I can play everything.”

You mentioned earlier it's a big day for you and your family. What was draft day like there? Where are you and tell me about the atmosphere in there as your family is waiting to hear your name called?

“Oh man, like I said, it's a blessing to be here just to celebrate things like this and cherish these moments. It's a once in a lifetime opportunity, so I'm just blessed. Can't really explain the feeling, but it's great to have these people around me and these people that support me each and every day.”

And where are you?

“I'm in California, Hollywood area.”

What was the feedback throughout the pre-Draft process that stood out the most to you?

“The feedback, like what I was getting from teams?”

Yeah, like how they saw you fit, your strengths, things that you might have to focus on as you transition to the NFL, anything like that?

“I've heard a lot of great things. Good press-man corner, good zone cover, could go down in cover-two and blow up some plays. Real physical. So yeah, I've heard a lot and it meant a lot to me.”

You're in Los Angeles. DB Deommodore Lenoir is down from L.A. too. Are you familiar with his play?

“Yeah, actually my two older brothers played in high school with him, so I know him a little bit. I'm pretty familiar with him.”



Transcriptions

LB Jaden Dugger
Press Conference – April 25, 2026
San Francisco 49ers
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What has the pre-draft process been like for you? Did you have a lot of contact with the 49ers?

“I had a few early Zoom meetings with them, but besides that, I knew they were in touch with the agent a little bit. But outside of that, not really. I kind of know how this process works. They try to keep it quiet so a lot of teams will get onto you. I was kind of aware of it, but I was surprised when I saw the area code pop up on my phone. For sure.”

You have an interesting background, having played safety and your height. Do you think that that's a strength of yours, playing coverage and kind of dropping back in the passing game?

“For sure. I feel like just that background helped me, and I'm more comfortable in those situations along with my size. So, a lot of people my size wouldn't be comfortable in those situations, but I am. I feel like those experiences prepared me for this.”

Obviously, LB Fred Warner's got a background where he started off in the defensive backfield at BYU and then was moved to linebacker. Are you looking forward to picking his brain?

“Of course. I mean, not just that. I mean, he's one of the best linebackers in the league, if not the best. And then I've got a lot of other vets in the room as well and I'm happy to learn from. I know how important it is for rookies to come in and learn so they're not overwhelmed with the process. So, I'm happy I get to do it and learn from the best.”

Did the 49ers at all discuss how they potentially could use you on the field?

“We didn't really talk about that too much, but my 49ers meeting was so early in the process, so it was a while ago. I'm not really sure what we really talked about. I've been on so many different visits now, but I'm pretty sure it'll be ironed out soon, like when I talk to them. So, I'm just excited.”

Where are you right now?

“I'm back home in Pittsburgh.”

As the Draft was unfolding, were you getting anxious? Were you getting frustrated? What was the experience for you to just wait for this?

“The thing is, I was kind of getting anxious. My agent kind of told me to expect like fourth to fifth. So, like I knew it was in that range where I could possibly be picked, but I know how things can go. You might not get picked where you're expected to. So, I was getting

kind of antsy. I just told my mom that like I was getting impatient. I was like, 'am I going to get picked?' And I promise you, as soon as I thought that I looked down at my phone and it was ringing. So, I mean, it was crazy. Just blessed."

Do you see yourself as a MIKE linebacker or a SAM linebacker who can cover tight ends and taller guys out of that position?

"I mean, I feel like that's part of my strong suit. I could do both. I could pretty much do anything. I feel like depending on how teams use me in schemes, I could fit into anything. So, I feel like whatever they ask me to do, I'm going to be able to do it. So, I'm ready for it."



Transcriptions

**OL Enrique Cruz Jr.
Press Conference – April 25, 2026
San Francisco 49ers**

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Talk about your contact with the Niners during your pre-Draft process.

“We had some contact throughout the whole Draft situation. There was some contact at the American Bowl a lot of scouts and the coaches came out here, flew out to Chicago and I did a workout for them.”

Were you surprised by the phone call from the 415-area code?

“I was and I wasn’t at the same time coach. [Assistant head coach/offensive line] Chris Foerster, he liked me a lot and stuff, so I was just waiting for the phone call. I didn’t know when it was going to come. Waiting for the phone call all day.”

Can you describe your style and attitude as a lineman, and how you see it fitting in the NFL?

“Oh, my style and attitude. My style is I’m a great guy. I do what I have to do. I hustle all the time. With everything I do, I’m always trying to finish the play and I’m going to do whatever it takes to finish the play.”

Where are you right now and who are you celebrating the Draft with?

“Oh, I’m with my whole family right now. I’m back at home in Chicago. I got a whole bunch of people right here. I’m trying to tell them to be quiet for a little bit.”

Which NFL tackles have you watched the most film of and model your game off of?

“Oh, I definitely watched a lot of [T] Trent Williams, but another guy I model my game off of and watch a lot of is [Tampa Bay Buccaneers T] Tristan Wirfs. I was there at the Iowa Junior Day when he got drafted. Ever since then, he’s been a really good tackle, and he’s a guy that I like to watch a lot and idolize.”

How much do you know about Trent Williams and his play at Tackle?

“Oh, he’s one of the best tackles ever. He is one of the greatest ever. I’m just so excited to meet him and be able to learn a lot from him.”