

San Francisco 49ers Media Conference

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Kyle Shanahan

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Weekday Press Conference



JOHN LYNCH: I think it worked out well for us. Start with Spencer Berger from UTSA. A young man who played tackle at UTSA. We think he has guard and tackle flexibility. Really good feet and quickness, excellent length as well and we think he's really a scheme fit. We targeted him early, he came out here on a 30 visit and got to know the young man better and became very convicted and we were hoping he would be there and he was and we jumped at the opportunity.

Next we went to a corner who we think has nickel flexibility in Samuel Womack. Interesting story, a walk-on at Toledo who became a two-time captain. Very highly productive player at Toledo. Can really run and very productive around the ball, all kinds of playmaker rating as our R & D guys took a look at it.

Next we drafted an offensive lineman who played tackle at Fordham. At the Senior Bowl he slid down the card and I think got better every day there. We liked his traits, liked his makeup a lot, another captain at his school, Nick Zakelj. We were calling him Zakelj the whole time. I saw the pronunciation and it's Zakelj as I read it.

KYLE SHANAHAN: You're not going to be an announcer, are you?

JOHN LYNCH: No, I used to be very good at that. But the next guy, frankly, I mean, Chris Kocurek, we keep saying, If you ever complain that we don't give you players, we're going to have a problem. But Kalia Davis is just, he's a guy we see a lot of DJ Jones in, that type explosion. Had an ACL injury and we're going to take our time to make sure Kalia is right. So I'm not sure if he'll be ready for the start of the regular season, could be a PUP guy, but really just loved, he fits exactly who we want to be as a defensive tackle and became very fond of him through the process. Didn't know how that would go, you never do about how long they're going to last. Felt like that was really good value there. Corner from Penn State, any time you play a

DB at Penn State you're doing something right. He's, this guy, he's got all the height, weight, speed, started a number of games at Penn State. I went back to that Pro Day, listened to the coaches speak glowingly about him and we liked that pick there.

Then finally Mr. -- he's relevant to us, but Mr. Irrelevant, Brock Purdy, and we're excited. He started a ton of games at Iowa State, really helped influence a culture change there and played a lot of good football for them. So with that we'll open it up for questions.

Q. You went through all those guys, was there something in the, was there a theme that kind of developed through the course of these past two days when you're making picks about all these guys kind of tying together?

JOHN LYNCH: Well, I think one of the themes was we didn't have a whole lot of needs on our roster, but we did have some that were there. We needed O-linemen. And so -- but we also wanted to stay extremely disciplined and not just take somebody to take 'em.

Berger, we kind of in that third and fourth round I felt like there was a gap, but he was one of the guys that we had and that we would be really excited to have, so we jumped at that. Zakelj fits that as well.

Corners, I think what DeMeco did on that staff last year, we were hurting at corner a large part of the year, to finish third in the league was pretty, a testament to DeMeco, his staff and to our players and we felt like we needed to add.

You can't have enough good ones. We had an open spot at nickel that we're going to let a bunch of people compete for and we think that Womack will go into that competition as well.

And so I think that that was kind of the theme and as I mentioned with Kalia, just a guy we were, he just, he's a very good fit for who we are and what we do.

Q. You mentioned Kalia, you said DJ Jones, when I

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saw some of the highlights he seemed really fluid and then I looked and he played linebacker. Is that a new thing? Linebacker moving to defensive tackle? I haven't really seen anything like that before.

JOHN LYNCH: You don't see it a whole lot. But I think an interesting trait on him, a lot like DJ, we preach, get off, explosion and you guys hear through training camp you hear that Kocurek, that comes out of his mouth more than anything. Get off, get off. And in addition, just getting off, some guys are just disruptive, but other guys can get off and they get in the backfield and finish. And I think linebacker play really helps him there, he's a really good finisher once he disrupts, so there's a lot to like on that kid. Obviously have to deal with the knee injury and we want to make sure -- eager to get him out here so we can get on top of his rehab and see exactly where he's at.

Q. A year ago you guys were here with Trey Lance was your first overall pick. Was he around or checking in at all this weekend and how do you feel that you helped him in the supporting cast offensively?

KYLE SHANAHAN: He wasn't around this weekend. He was around Monday through Thursday. But I guess he around Thursday, we didn't pick on Thursday, so it was different from the start of the draft.

But I mean we went into this draft that, just numbers wise that we were down in numbers at corner and O-line and so it was nice to add two of those at each position. And then you try to take the best player available and you got needs which you always want to address, but you never want to over address. So if the right player with your needs goes there, then it makes a lot of sense. So it was cool we came out with four of those guys in two different areas.

The others just, we came out we felt with the best player at the time and I do think there's players that can help Trey, that can help our whole offense and I was really excited about the defensive guys we added it too.

Q. Did you have any interaction with Brock Purdy leading up to this?

KYLE SHANAHAN: I didn't have any interaction with him. I was just going through this whole draft, I spend a lot of my time on all positions, knowing that we might not have the luxury to take a quarterback. It's stuff that our scouts get ahead on, I had Brian and Clay, Griese and Kubiak get on that the last couple months and they gave you a list of the guys they liked to try to narrow it down where possibilities were we would take one. And there aren't a lot when you get to that part of the draft. So he was a guy we knew early that was our number one free agent we were

going to go after and when you get through there and they haven't been drafted and we got the last pick, we thought it was perfect. I mean, the guy has played a lot of football, plays the game the right way, is extremely tough, gets the ball to the right spot plays very well in the pocket and a guy who can come in here and help fill out this roster and give himself a chance to make a team.

Q. Two spots you guys didn't draft were center and safety which to novices maybe are like, well why didn't do you that. It looks like you might have needs there. Is that a reflection of just the way the draft fell or do you feel pretty comfortable with who you have?

JOHN LYNCH: A little of both. And a free agent class that's come along that might include some candidates there as well and so you have these needs, but you also we have Jake Brendel who is not a household name but we have a lot of confidence in his ability, we have talked about Max's situation, we'll see where that ends up. Zakelj might have some flex there as well. So we're going to work through it and we'll find it. We'll find that answer.

Q. Would you consider moving Dana Bunz to the center?

KYLE SHANAHAN: We consider all that stuff. We feel like we drafted two inside guys. They both played tackle in college, we feel like we drafted two inside guys, but you want to see everyone at center. Usually have one center, but you got to have somebody else who can play it. So you definitely have an option there. Just talked about Jake Brendel, who we're excited about. So keeping our fingers crossed on that, but we got to plan and know we can't count on it, but will have to have a center, love to have a safety, but we do the best with our picks and I love the guys that we did add and an O-lineman who can play inside you hope they can play center, but we'll find that out in camp. Usually that's how we roll with it.

Q. You're not into establishing the depth chart in late April but as far as strong safety is it --

KYLE SHANAHAN: When you look at the safety you would love to have a safety, but we also got Jimmy Wirt and I think he's pretty good. We spent a draft pick on (inaudible) last year who we think had a really good rookie year. We brought in a really good safety in free agency, a special teams captain for his team, started a number of games at Indy this year and then we got (no microphone) in 2020, he played half a year as a starter and we thought he finished his last five games as a true starting safety and before that he was always one of our best special teams players. So you got four NFL players there. You always want to up grade and take the best, but you do have four

NFL players there.

Q. How is Mora looking?

KYLE SHANAHAN: I think he's doing a well. We're not allowed to see them out there until Monday, that's when coaches can go out on the field and so that's when we'll go out and work and do some drills and everything. But he was here the first two weeks and been working out with the guys and I'm excited about him.

Q. Is there a scenario in which Jaquiski Tartt could be back too? I know he's still out there.

JOHN LYNCH: We haven't talked to him. We haven't gone there yet. We will see. He's a free agent. We think highly of Jaquiski, he's played a lot of good football for us and we're grateful for that. Talented, talented dude. And he'll play in this league and continue to play at a high level.

KYLE SHANAHAN: One other guy we know that we believe in as a person and everyone knows Jaquiski played at a high level and we would never rule out anybody like that.

Q. When it comes to adding one of these veteran free agents is that something you want to do right away or could that wait until June or camp?

KYLE SHANAHAN: I think -- I don't, I mean, if we feel it makes sense and someone else is willing to do it for the right price and we think that fits the spot on the roster, we would never have any problem with that. We would try to do that as soon as possible, but it's got to be soon.

Q. Do you have the financial wherewithal to do it right now or would you have to slide people off the roster?

KYLE SHANAHAN: There's people upstairs working on that. They can figure out the algorithm or equation.

Q. Do you have a date in mind when we can stop asking Alex make questions?

JOHN LYNCH: You would have to ask Alex that.

KYLE SHANAHAN: We both got an idea which way he's leaning, but that's really not us to do that. It's kind of up to Alex.

Q. He had such a good season in 2021. Does it surprise you that he's wavering?

KYLE SHANAHAN: Yeah, I think he did a little bit, but it's also understandable. I mean, football's not the easiest

thing to do no matter how much you enjoy the competition and he's up there in age.

But in terms of how he looks on tape and how he was, everyone knows he can still play. So that's, whatever is best for him and his family, and I think that's something he's trying to work with. I know he just got married and went on a honeymoon, so you don't want to ask those things right when they get back.

Q. We talked about the relative depth of the roster already, and you didn't trade, nine of these guys coming in. Is that something that you just embrace and you know there's going to be a ton of competition for pretty few spots?

JOHN LYNCH: We love the competition. We'll see where the undrafted free agent class ends up, but we're going to be close to the 90-man limit. We don't have to get all the way there. We like our roster. We really do. We think it's well-constructed and now we got to go put it together.

This is, there's teams that I think can compete for the thing, we think we're one of those, and now you got to put the work in, have a tremendous off-season, come together as a team. There's so much movement on these rosters these days that that's what it really comes down to. Not every team has that type of roster that I think if you're honestly looking at it has an opportunity to go compete, and we believe that we do and now it's about our guys coming together and working hard to get ready for this year's team as to who we are and we're excited about that process.

Q. Was it your plan to use all nine picks coming into the draft or did you want to consolidate and move up?

JOHN LYNCH: There was a couple times today we were on the phone thinking about moving up and then as long as you have a couple players that are still there, let's hang. We talked about going back. So it was different because we're used to moving around some, but it just played out that way, that nothing ever came to fruition and we were happy with the way it flowed.

Q. Were there any more calls about D-Bo and has anything changed with that?

JOHN LYNCH: There wasn't. Nothing's changed.

Q. This is kind of an odd question, but at the end draft is there a sense of relief? Is it a let down like a wedding like you spent so much time planning it and then it's done or what do you think?

JOHN LYNCH: I always think this process is so fun and I'm always so proud of our group the way we come together and work. It really is. I mean, the word collaborative is so overused, but I think our process really is that.

Obviously our staff upstairs, we're working on this thing non-stop. Coaches are doing what they should do, coaching. But then Kyle asks a lot of his coaches and we ask a lot of his coaches to contribute to the process because we feel that's the way it's best done.

The interesting thing this year is our coaching staff got shaken up a little. You lose some. You know, Mike McDaniel, some of those guys were tremendous evaluators and knew our system, but there was also an influx of new ideas and so that was really fun.

So I think those guys contributed some things. But we have a system in place that is a well-oiled machine, so I think that it flows well. So I think that at this time I'm ready just to go have a good party. You put a lot of work in and now it's time to go celebrate the fruits of your labor and then get back to work. Phase two starts Monday.

KYLE SHANAHAN: I agree with everything he said, but I'm definitely celebrating that I don't have to watch college film until next February.

Q. With Mike and so many other guys that used to work for you or run similar schemes, do you almost notice like guys that you have graded coming off and you're like, oh, you know?

KYLE SHANAHAN: Oh, gosh, yeah.

JOHN LYNCH: Yeah. Yeah, with Martin at Washington, Kwesi now at Minnesota, I think you're trained to see things a certain way, your R & D systems are similar, so a lot of the same players end up there. It's not always the same, but there's a lot of picks that we're taking and we're, oh, man, we were coming after that guy and vice versa.

KYLE SHANAHAN: You realize how much more it is in your sixth year because it's personnel, it's also coaches, because all the teams are set to, we have guys we've coach with who are, our coaching staff and personnel staff are very involved in the process together, so wherever they branch off, whether it's Denver, Green Bay, New York, Washington, there's a lot more teams than it used to be, so you can kind of have an idea of who you think affected that pick.

Q. In the past you've shared a couple stories about great calls you made. You're changing lives of these

players. Do you have any of that stood out from this year's draft?

JOHN LYNCH: Let me see here. Yeah. Yeah. I think a lot of -- everyone's excited. So I think Kalia Davis stood out. He was here on his 30 visit. We got to know him quite well. It's been a tough process for him coming off the ACL. I think it was extremely emotional for him. He got close with Chris and Darryl and DeMeco and our staff as well as our personnel. That one stood out.

Some of the special stories. Danny Gray, he's got quite a story. But even to guys we've never met, like a Zakelj, guys that are on our scouting staff have interviewed him and whatnot. I've never met him. But just having a good conversation back in Cleveland with his family.

KYLE SHANAHAN: Danny was cool. I think his parents were thanking us so much in the background. His dad, I'm assuming, but I'm not sure.

JOHN LYNCH: No. That's always one of the coolest things.

KYLE SHANAHAN: It's cooler when we can see it.

JOHN LYNCH: Yeah, that's true.

KYLE SHANAHAN: When you get to see it and actually talk to people it's a little better.

JOHN LYNCH: My favorite of all time was JK's dad was rolling on the carpet. That was pretty good.

Q. There were a lot of offensive players, receivers, who were really fast at the combine this year, Danny Gray being one of them. What kind of distinguished him from those other guys and does he remind you of any other receivers that you've coached in the past?

KYLE SHANAHAN: Yeah. I mean, I do think there's fast guys and then guys ahead of those guys and I think Danny is one of them.

And there's anywhere from one to five in the draft and I think there was more in this draft than usual, probably starting with the Alabama receiver in the first round.

So you label those guys and anyone who is in that club, which was barely any of them, and then you look who has the best hands out of them, the really fast guys do not have as good hands as others and you try to see who is the toughest, who stays the healthiest, and you put all those things together and what I like about Danny, I would say his number one trait was speed, but his number two trait

was toughness, and I think that's a rare quality for those to be one and two so I definitely like that about him a lot.

JOHN LYNCH: Going back to him, we pride ourselves on the yards after catch and I remember one time calling Kyle and saying, Man, I just threw a screen reel on, and when you just have a speed guy, sometimes those guys are very linear athletes.

So he can take that ball. He's got that toughness, so he's kind of fearless but he can also, he can find his way. We call it slashing. He slashes his way through the defense and that was fun to find a guy with that much speed who also has the other elements and I think it only starts with toughness because if you're afraid, you're not going to go through there very fast.

So he plays to his time speed, which is a rarity, both down the field and also with the ball in his hands.

Q. (No microphone.)

KYLE SHANAHAN: That's the hardest thing about the NFL that, that's why I talk about you want to get the best player available but you also got to look at numbers too.

Our numbers were lower at corner and they're lower at O-line, so you know you have to have those numbers. Then you look at best players. But we got, like you look at our D-line, we got more NFL players on our D-line than can be on an NFL roster.

So you think of how to take 'em and things like that and then it all plays into it and if you think that you're going to take a good guy early just because he's the best player but they can't make your team, that sounds great, like, oh, we'll just put him on practice squad and we'll develop 'em.

But everyone else in the league knows that they should have been a high draft pick and I promise you they're not going to last long on your practice squad. So it's hard to develop a talented guy because usually they're stolen. Other people got to think they're not talented for them to stay on your practice squad.

So that's what's so stressful about a draft pick. When you take a high guy who is that talented, if he's not ready to play they're going to sit there on your roster until they're ready, which can be week 8, can be year two. You know they're that good, they just need more time, but there's no area to put 'em aside because the 53-man roster and stuff.

So that's what the huge challenge is and that's why sometimes you see people trade back and things like that because it's not worth going for that guy there because you

don't know if he can make your position on the team.

Q. So that's why Kalia was such a luxury, because you don't need him and you can protect him by keeping him on PUP --

JOHN LYNCH: Yeah, but we're not going to make any judgments on that. You get all these inflection points for a guy who's been injured. They have a recheck at the combine. So our docs were there. Kalia was there.

But until you have him and see exactly where he is in his rehab, I think we've got to look at him during his 30 visit which gave us some confidence about where he's at, but we're really going to have to get him in here.

So no judgment as to whether he's ready in training camp or not. We're just not there yet, but we felt good enough about the talent that it was worth it.

KYLE SHANAHAN: Also, you have so many times where you don't, you think you're good there, and then someone gets hurt walking into the locker room in OTAs and you all of a sudden lost a guy and, oh, man, I thought we had too many. There's no point in drafting a guy and then it's the first day of training camp or OTAs and one is done, and you're like, oh, my gosh, we should have taken that guy. Injuries are such a big deal and that's why you got to have some luck and you got to keep working at it.

Q. Will you share how many free agents you plan to sign?

JOHN LYNCH: That's kind of going on right now, so --

Q. Is there a number?

JOHN LYNCH: I would be lying if I told you because it's like happening right now. A lot of competition out there. So we'll see. I'm getting updates as we go. But we'll update you when that's done.

Q. How much easier or harder was it? There are I think three times as many players that declared for the draft because last year was weird with COVID. What was that difference like?

JOHN LYNCH: Everyone's got their draft meetings planned. I think a common theme around the league, talking to my counterparts, where they went beyond and just because of the COVID there were more players in the pool. They had the opportunity to come back. A lot of kids took the opportunity, took advantage of that, and so there were more kids to grade, and it, it was a lot more work, but there's a lot more players to pick from, so that was cool.

Q. Can you go more in-depth on Brock Purdy? What are the traits or the characteristics you see from him that stood out when you watched the film?

KYLE SHANAHAN: He knows how to play the position well. He's got a ton of reps. You're not looking on what you can develop him into, you're looking at, this guy knows how to play the position, let's see how he can do it at this level. I think there's some traits that were very similar to Nick Mullens, it was a four-year starter who played at a very high level in college and people want to know how he can do it at this level. That's why we got him where we did, but this is a very hard position to play and he does it extremely consistent. I love how balanced he is in the pocket, I love that he'll hang in there, doesn't need good protection to get rid of the ball and usually if someone's open he gets the ball to the right spot.

Q. So there's no priority placed on getting quarterbacks that look like stylistically like Trey, because you have Nate under contract, you have --

KYLE SHANAHAN: There would be if we thought the right guy was there. You're not trying to like -- hey, I would love to draw up like the perfect balance of everybody, but you're going to try to take the guys who you think that are the best when you have the opportunity to take 'em. We thought pretty strongly that Brock was at that point.

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