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INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER – LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

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Head Coach Ron Rivera

On signing WR Dontrelle Inman and what he sees out of his tight end group:

“It should be official this morning. I’m pretty excited about bringing a young man in like that who’s got some playing experience. It’s a young group of wide receivers we have and anytime we get the opportunity to bring a player in that’s had success, we’re excited about it. I feel good about the tight ends, I do. I think, obviously once we get Logan through the protocol, we’ll be OK.”

On his first impressions of the rookies, specifically T Saahdiq Charles:

“Saahdiq looked good. Big, athletic, strong, a young guy, raw, a lot of talent. I think he’s a guy as he goes through the process, is going to build confidence. I think that’s one of the things too, you’ve got to learn the language and that’s probably the thing that slows most rookies down from getting on to the field quickly. But if Saahdiq can learn the language and understand the techniques that we’re teaching and be able to take both of those things and mesh them together, I think we might have a pretty good football player. Although I’m real curious and interested to watch Geron Christian, I think he’s a very athletic guy who’s gotten some opportunities and has taken advantage of it. I think we’re going to have a real good battle at left tackle. I’m excited to watch that.”

On how much a lack of an off-season hurts a rookie, specifically an offensive lineman:

“It depends on what they did in the offseason. This is the second time I’ve been through something when you don’t have an offseason with your players. The first time it was with a quarterback though, a little bit different but that guy spent a lot of time with quarterback coaches, spent a lot of time with the people down at IMG getting himself ready. I know Saahdiq spent a lot of time in the offseason working his technique. I believe he went out and sought the help of a former player, somebody had told me who it was... I can’t remember. He had a pretty constructive offseason. He did a lot of positive things in terms of giving himself a chance. But again, I think the biggest thing more so than anything else is really just learning the language. Don’t forget, we Zoom that with those guys everyday, four-times a week during the offseason during what typically would be your OTA’s and mini-camps. Plus being a rookie, he’s got to put in the extra time as well with our coaches.”

On if there will be competition on the offensive line elsewhere from left tackle and left guard:

“That’s a tough one because I really do like our other three positions. I think our center, guard, tackle situation is very strong coming into this, but they still have got to compete. Somebody could come out of the woodwork and really push those guys. That’s a very strong position, the center to the right side of our offensive line, we’re pretty excited about seeing that group come together. Again, the big questions being the left tackle and left guard, I think that’s a great question in terms of is there going to be the type of competition that you see on the left side, on the right side. I’m hard pressed to believe it because I really do like those three guys that I mentioned, the center, guard, tackle situation.”

On his plans of handling tackling during camp compared to years past:

“One of the things that we’re going to look at doing is some tackling circuits on the defensive side, some stations in terms of where they can practice their techniques, don’t necessarily have to practice at full speed. One of the things I went through when I was in Carolina, was that... halfway through my first season was one of the things that was very evident was we weren’t tackling as well as we needed to and Sean McDermott,

who's now with Buffalo as the Head Coach, he came with this great idea of having a tackling circuit. Why don't we do these stations where these guys work on their different techniques for tackling. Again, working on the technique of tackling so guys understand how to form it up, how to fit it up and how to make a tackle, I think is important because you're not really going to be able to simulate as much live action as you would like to and again, you're right, they aren't going to get the four preseason games where they can really work on the tackling. It's something you've got to be really good about, you've got to really work on their technique and their ability to tackle in terms of whenever you do have a live period, you've got to give these guys the opportunity."

On how QB Alex Smith has been looking through this early process of camp:

"He's looked good, he really has. I'll be honest, I was pleasantly surprised to see how far along he is. It's been exciting to watch his progression. He's working on stuff on the side with the trainers, he's trying to mirror all of the activity that the other QBs are doing with Kenny [Zampese] and Scott Turner. He gets a chance to work on all of those techniques and he's looked very fluid, he really has. As a tribute to who he is, as a tribute to his trainers and his doctors that have helped him get to where he is today."

On his contingency plan if one of the coaches were to contract COVID-19:

"We've talked about that as far as those things are concerned, the big thing is somebody will move up in terms of those. We are fortunate, as in today's game, that pretty much every position has a position assistant and they are younger coaches that have come in and are getting opportunities to learn and develop their craft. What may happen, depending on who gets sick, that person (position assistant) will elevate. But, you'll have the coordinator there a little bit more than usual, I'll be there a little bit more than usual and some of the other position coaches that are around them can help out as well. Something that we talked about two weeks ago when we first got back, how do we want to handle this? The big thing just being, we got young guys in position and they have to understand, they have to realize and recognize that their opportunity can come at anytime, no different than a player. If a starter gets hurt or can't play, the backup has to be ready to go and in this case, the same thing."

On the opt-out deadline and if it's helpful to know who will be here and who will opt out:

"Yeah, it is (helpful) because this is a very serious situation and from what I've seen, the guys that have all opted out, you listen to their reasoning, it all makes sense. Who am I to judge whether or not a guy should or shouldn't? I actually have talked to one of our players who did opt out and it was very heartfelt, we had a great discussion and I told him I respect his decision and so he made his own decision based on himself and his family. To me, that's important when you make those types of decisions."

On if QB Alex Smith can be part of the QB conversation in camp:

"I can envision it. The big thing is if he can do the things that we need him to do that he needs to do to help himself on the football field, he'll be part of the conversation most definitely. He's done some really good things last week, he went through all four workout days... had no residual effect the next morning, which is always important because the next day, they usually tell us. He comes down and he's just raring to go. We'll see how he is this week and we'll go from there."

On if there is a deadline for having QB Alex Smith become a part of the QB conversation:

"I really haven't thought about a drop-dead point, mostly because he's a veteran, he's a very smart QB... bright individual. To be honest with you, I probably believe he already knows 75% of our playbook. For him, it's really just a matter of, can he do the movements he needs to do? Can he protect himself when he's on the field more so than anything else? Remember, he's going to have to hand the ball off, he's going to have to drop back into the pocket and throw the ball, he's going to have to escape and we have to make sure he can do those things and protect himself as he plays."

On COVID-19 impacting the lack of contact extensions and that affecting the status of G Brandon Scherff:

“I think, as we get to know him more and more, it really is one of those things where you feel more and more comfortable with a guy like that and making that kind of commitment. He’s been great. He’s been here a little over a week, we’ve interacted with him on Zoom during the offseason. Now we get the chance to watch him workout, he’s been darn good, he really has. He’s been as good as advertised. One of the things that we talk about is who these guys are and as we’ve gotten to know Brandon, as I’ve gotten to know him, I’ve been impressed so far. It’s one of those things that again, going into the offseason, who knows. We’ll see what happens during the season but he is somebody that has been as good as advertised so far.”

On comparing QB Dwayne Haskins Jr’s knowledge of the playbook compared to QBs Kyle Allen and Alex Smith:

“I don’t think Dwayne is very far behind, I really don’t. He’s done a great job of studying, preparing and getting himself ready for this. He’s been great. He’s been on the field, doing the things we’ve asked of him. He’s done the extra stuff that he and I talked about in the offseason. He’s done the things that, I think, puts him right there where he needs to be at this junction of where we are in our training, having only been able to do zoom and now only having four days of work on the field. He’s done the job that I think deserves recognition so I appreciate you asking about that.”

On if the lack of offseason will prohibit playing time for younger players:

“Not necessarily, it really just depends on how the players react and handle the situation they’re in, their circumstances. It’s going to be real interesting to watch how they develop and grow. Right now, I told our coaches the other day when we had a meeting that we’re really in the OTA phases right now. If you look at the way we’re allowed to work out with these players, we’re basically in phase one. We’re going to be starting phase two shortly and then really getting into phase three, which is really just before we start with pads. We’re going to have a good two and half weeks worth of work that, I feel, simulate the OTA process, which I think is good because it gives us an opportunity to work on the base fundamentals of the very basics of what they need to know. Then once we put the pads on, then we start to see where these guys are at. I’m not going to sell any of our rookies short, I think some of them have come out and done the things that we expected them to do. They’ve caught our eye, they’ve caught our attention and now the big thing will be, how do they handle the rest of it. One thing that always does seem to happen once you get into training camp, probably two-thirds of the way, you start to see the overwhelming affect of all the material that you’ve given them, all the techniques you try to teach them, if fatigue starts to set in. Now it becomes a mental game of pushing themselves through. I think it’s going to change; I do like the way the ramp-up period is. Going through these phases and kind of simulating the growth. Like I said, we’re pretty much in the phase one type of program, we’ll be in phase two and each time it’s just another step and another step as we gradually go forward to determining who our team’s going to be as we get into the first regular season game.”

On how to manage RB Antonio Gibson’s workload as he goes between two positions:

“Well I think the big thing is, because what he’ll be working on will be specific things for him as opposed to trying to give him the entire volume of everything he needs to know. He comes in, he’ll have specific things that he does. Whether he’s getting the ball, whether he’s a decoy or what. It’ll be as if he’s just learning the things that he needs to know and then we’ll grow him the rest of the way from there. You can get into a situation where a guy that’s going to play multi-positions for you and it can become overwhelming. Secondly though, he’s a very bright young man, he really is. I think learning is not going to be his problem as much as just understanding and getting a feel for the pro game as opposed to the college game.”

On his approach to playing games in front of an empty stadium:

“No, not necessarily just because that’s how you practice, that’s how it’s always been. That’s kind of the different thing about going from the practice field to the stadium, is the practice field is pretty much remote, its away from everybody, its away from everything. You get to the stadium and then there’s that excitement factor that does kind of ramp it up. It’s really going to be about how the players handle it, more so, I think than the way we do. I just feel comfortable in knowing that everybody’s going to be in the same situation.”

On if CB Ronald Darby is fully healthy and will start to resemble the player he was in Buffalo.

“The one thing about watching Ronald, we had the opportunity to watch tape on him, I like his explosiveness in terms of trying to make plays. He’s got good quickness, good speed. He does play with his eyes in the backfield on occasion which gets him into a little bit of trouble. Some of the things go back to really just playing the technique a little bit better, being a little bit more disciplined. I don’t think his skillset has worn any, I just think it comes back to just trying to be a little more disciplined and making the plays that are there as opposed to trying to force certain things to happen, I think that’s got him in trouble a couple of times. I don’t see any deterioration in his skillset and I just think that this is a veteran guy that knows how to do things but has to understand how to do them within the framework of what we’re trying to teach him. I think he has the chance to be a solid football player and be the guy that can help us.”