

WASHINGTON

FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER – LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

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Wide Receivers Coach Jim Hostler

On the depth at wide receiver:

“Right now, that is really what we have, depth. We have a lot of young guys that really haven’t played a lot so everyone has a shot. That is really where we are at. We are looking at the depth chart, we go out there and haven’t practiced hardly yet, so we know that. We will find that out in the next couple of weeks.”

On what he has seen from QB Alex Smith:

“I’m not surprised with where he is at. The reason why we brought Alex to San Francisco is because we know what he brought, his mental makeup and what kind of guy he is. How tough he is mentally, none of that is surprising. He looks good. It’s short of a miracle that he is out there, going through workouts, doing stuff with the training staff and doing what everyone is doing. It is just short of a miracle.”

On WR Terry McLaurin and what he needs to do to take that next step:

“You look at him last year, he is a young player. Not a lot of people had expectations of what he was going to be. Teams that they played didn’t know him or weren’t really considered about him. That is something to do with your early years. Once you have success in this league it is about expectations, managing expectations. It is going to be about now, being the number one guy coming into the season, you’re going to get more attention. You just sort of catch balls as you go through the year. His growth from year one to year two will be all about the expectations and managing them. Getting better as a player.”

On what the expectations should be for McLaurin:

“Our expectations should be to compete every day. He improves, learns the offense and becomes a reliable player for the quarterback to throw the ball to. Those are our expectations and his expectations. Everyone else’s expectations are that he becomes a star receiver, catches a lot of balls and is going to catch 100 balls. We are just worried about his daily improvement, growth as a player and his ability for the quarterback to trust him.”

On how WR Antonio Gandy-Golden fits with the receiver group:

“He is a big body. He has range and is long. He has ball skills. He plays faster than his time. Everyone looks at his time from a 40-yard dash. We pay no attention to that it is all about how fast you are on the field. He is side-by-side with a guy that runs a 4.3 or 4.4. If he is 15-yards in a route running the same speed, it doesn’t matter what he is timed in. He has stride length and can play with the people around him. He can play fast with bodies around him because he is strong. That is why we liked him when he was coming out. How he fits into our world? We like to throw the ball down the field. The bigger you are, the farther down the field you are, the more of a target you are to throw the ball to. Bigger players have had success in this system down the field. Big targets, you can throw the ball up and they can go get it.”

On what he thinks this wide receiving group is lacking:

“Well, we are young. The experience. We don’t have a lot of experience. From that standpoint it is hard to tell what we are lacking. We aren’t quite sure because we haven’t been down the road yet just like with any young player. They are all going to get better. How much they get better and how they fit into the offense. They are all down the road in front of us. They are all talented players. We have some speed. We have some bigger body guys with some length. We have a couple of guys that fit into the way we play. There is some diversity there.

Hopefully over the next couple weeks we can narrow it down to how we are going to be doing this. We can go have some success with the quarterback as someone who throws us the ball.”

On what his expectations are for RB Antonio Gibson:

“He is a good kid. Obviously, he played in college. Coming out with my group, being in meetings, he is comfortable. It is natural for him. He has done a lot of things, but he has to develop just like all young guys. The more you can do in this league, he is the kind of guy that can line up in different spots. He is going to be a matchup issue for a defense. Those are the guys you can take advantage of and do some things.”

On how he structures practice with the limited time to prepare for the season:

“We are going to start with the process of giving everyone the ability to compete. Repetitions, the ability for guys to show what they can do and how we can expose them either good or bad. We just go from there with communication from the head coach, personnel people on down to Scotty [Offensive Coordinator Scott Turner] and me of deciding who the best players are going to be moving forward and how our depth fills in behind them. Your depth is going to have to show up more this year than it has in the past because one, we are in a shorter timeframe to get ready. They won’t be able to play as many snaps early in the season, they aren’t going to be ready. You have to have your depth play a little bit more which will help us gain experience which will help us develop more than one or two player and that will help us down the road. We will come up with those guys and move forward.”

On installing the offense and building chemistry during the virtual offseason:

“Yes, we went through an offseason program and we installed how we want things to look and run. Obviously, we are not out there with them, so we are not tweaking or refining, having communication with them and how they specifically do something in that moment of time. They have a mindset or a mind frame that they have been given and then they go out there and work. The way we have judged it so far, when we started back up with these guys and started throwing the ball, we started to see things that have been developed already. It wasn’t the first day of something that they have done already. That tells us right there that they took the information, went out there and started to work on it. Now, it is just a process of refining it and going forward.”

On how he evaluates players that don’t have ton of tape:

“Really, there is not a lot of tape on some of these guys and I don’t know them. The process for me is going through, giving them the information on how we want it to look. Not just what we want them to do, but how we do it and then again. We started this week with who has taken the information, gone with it and where are they at in the process. How far down the road? The final thing that you mention is that we have a clean slate. Besides Terry, that we know can play and has been out there, the rest of the group is really young. They are all in a competition right now for those next receiver spots. We understand Terry can play. We knew that, that’s why he was drafted higher. We know that his role is there. We just have to make him as good as we can make him as fast as we can make him with the quarterback. The rest of the guys are all in a competition. I have no idea who the next two guys are right now.”

On if he views WRs Steven Sims Jr. and Trey Quinn as more than slot guys:

“Again, we’re starting early, so they are slot players. That is what they are comfortable doing and that is what they’ve done in the past. They made a team as a slot player in the past and these coaches knew what they were doing. They evaluate and we’re just going to go through that process. We know that they can play inside. How much they can play outside, we’re going to work through and see how they fit and see who doesn’t come forward outside and it may be Steven and it may be Trey. If it is not, then it’ll be some of these other younger guys that have developed outside and then we can strictly keep them inside. There are advantages to both. There are advantages of having inside players and outside players because you ask them to do specifically different things and you train them different. So, that part of it is not handicapped. If it goes that way, then it means that

we have a couple more outside guys and we can specifically train two guys to play inside. It is going to take two guys in there in the whole year as we go down the road.”

On how he feels about his group in terms of run blocking:

“Kelvin [Harmon] hurt because he is a big body guy, he's a physical guy. That was going to be something that we were going to use more in the run game. But, we've got some other bigger guys to be able to do it. It is not nearly as prevalent as it was 10 years ago in the NFL for receivers blocking. Now there is so much built into the pass options in the run game, so guys are still in their element and still affecting the defense without having to run down there and put their face on somebody on a block. Now we're going to have to do that, don't get me wrong. But, there is a lot less of that, that is going on in this league.”

On if it is an advantage to come in cold with this team and have a bunch of younger players:

“There is good and bad in everything they say, right? The good part of that is that they are young and things make sense to them because they haven't been trained any other way, so there is kind of a clean slate. There is an open mind to the process whereas some older guys have been through it and their process is pretty clean. They know what they're doing and how they do it. Then the other side of that coin is obviously experience. Obviously when you have players that have played, they have experience and you don't have to teach them as much and it is a little bit easier on the whole process when guys have been down the road and have done it before. It is fun. I coach them all the same. Guys at different levels. I have had some great players in this league late in their careers and have had some great relationships in the coaching aspect of it. I don't coach them any different. Their process fits into my process and then we go from there.”

On if he thinks it is possible that a reliable second option will emerge outside of WR Terry McLaurin:

“Crystal ball, I wish I could look into the future and tell you that I've got a definite but I don't. That is part of the fun of this whole thing as it is anyway. There will be somebody that emerges and hopefully that one person we're sitting here talking about next year as, 'Oh, he had a breakout season just like we were talking about one guy from last year.' Hopefully that is the way that it goes. Hopefully it is maybe more than one or two guys and then we can build a solid depth receiving corps moving down the road.”

On if he feels like he has enough time during this training camp to be prepared for the regular season:

“As a coach, absolutely not (laughs). Obviously, we want an offseason and we go through training camp and before the first game we have some preseason games to see how guys react because games are totally different than practice. Obviously from our standpoint, we'd love to have all of that, but we don't. We're also realistic and we know that it is not going to be as clean as if you were in the system and you've been playing with the quarterback where that is at a disadvantage to us. So, the first few weeks of this season we're going to have to find ways to win games. We're going to have to find ways to continue to improve while winning games to give ourselves a chance. Again, the longer and farther we go down the road, the better off we will be. It is going to be a little bit of a challenge early in the season.”

On the growth he saw in McLaurin's game and what he wants him to improve on:

“Last year when I watched him play, he surprised me with his play speed. How well he played with people around him, how well he played fast, how well he got to where he needed to go against good players, challenging players and how well he finished with people around him. That is the hard thing about this -- you go out there and practice and throw balls around to guys and in games somebody is standing right next to you and that is a totally different thing. That is what really stood out to me in evaluating him. He did a really good job of that last year for a young guy. Usually that takes guys a little bit of time to learn and be comfortable with. He's going to have to improve his game from a route standpoint. He's going to have to be able to do more in the route tree. He is going to have to be moving around more. All of those things, when you have a No. 1 guy it is all about how defenses are going to defend him. That is where for him to keep growing, the ability for him to

move around, expand his route tree, challenge defenders inside and out, that is where the growth is going to happen and that is where he needs to grow. As far as playing outside and running some route, you're not going to do that for the next eight years. If you're a good player and you're a No. 1 in this league, you're going to have to develop your route tree and you're going to have to go inside. And he is going to have to do that.”

On the pressure that will be on McLaurin leading this young group:

“That is the challenge. Last year he didn't have any of that. So, the expectations. That is along the lines of the meaning I was talking about earlier about expectations. But, that is really what I'm talking about, it's the pressure of being a No. 1 guy.”