

# WASHINGTON

FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER – LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

August 23, 2020

## Head Coach Ron Rivera

### **On if the team responded well to yesterday's message in practice today:**

“I thought they did. I really do mean that, too. I was very pleased with it. This was a tough one today too, it was probably the hottest one we've had in pads. I thought the guys handled that very, very well and all the way to the finish. I was very pleased with the way that they handled themselves today. I think we're starting to understand and get a feel for what's expected and what's needed. I thought they came through for the most part. We'll look at the tape and we'll figure out what I've got to yell at later today.”

### **On the connection between QB Dwayne Haskins and TE Logan Thomas:**

“That's what you're looking for. You're looking for him to develop that rapport with the receivers. You want him to have that kind of feel. Obviously, he has it with [WR] Terry [McLaurin], he has it with [WR] Steven Sims, he's developing it with [RB J.D.] McKissic, he's developing it with Logan. You've got to have that kind of rapport where things sometimes aren't just about what's said in the huddle, but what's about what's looked at on the field. Again, the only way to do that is about reps, reps, reps and that's what all the quarterbacks have to do. Continue to get reps with as many of those players as they can as we go through this training camp.”

### **On what the team did well at practice:**

“I have a little saying: ‘Do the right thing. Do what's right. Not because it's easy or not because it's hard or it's complicated or it looks fabulous, do it because it's what you're supposed to do. If it's easy, do it. If it's hard, do it. But do what's right.’ That's what they did today. I thought the quarterbacks made some really good decisions. I really do mean that. I thought the receivers won at the line of scrimmage, which they haven't been doing. That was pleasing. On the defensive side, I thought they handled the front very nicely. I thought the linebackers played downhill. Again, we're looking for those things on tape and we're looking for those things as we're practicing out on the field. So that was pleasing, as far as the way they handled it and I thought they finished the day on a strong note.”

### **On RB Adrian Peterson:**

“He's showing exactly what I hoped for, and that's setting the tone. In a couple of situations where we're running the ball downhill and you look at some of these defenses, especially when you're on tape and you see an arm come out, you just know Adrian's running through that arm. You know he's going to break those arm tackles. He's going to pick up four, five, six yards on second down. That's what you want. That's what he's here for – to set the tone, set the tempo for our offense as a physical team.”

### **On how the offensive line performed today:**

“Just so everybody knows, I called [G] Wes [Martin] out [yesterday], but Wes was just the example. He just happened to be the guy I was thinking about at the time. There were several guys I could've thought about at that point in time. But I thought the offensive line handled some things very nicely. The positive thing about our offensive line is, whether it's the first group or the second group, they're getting challenged by four really, really good football players all the time. You look at the rotation we have as far as our first eight or nine or 10 guys, it's a heck of a rotation. It's good to watch those guys get up there. It's good to watch those guys get challenged. They're going to be challenged all the way through. Our second bunch on the offensive line, they're

not going against backups. They're going against legitimate guys, and that's going to make us a better football team."

**On CB Ronald Darby:**

"I like how he's setting the tone. I really do. I watch the way he practices, I watch the way he talks to the young guys, I watch the way he talks to the other receivers, too. A guy like that is invaluable to who you want to be. He's a playmaker, he's a guy who does things because he's a pro and he understands it. What I also like is that [defensive coordinator] Jack [Del Rio] has been playing to his strengths. So that's a huge plus."

**On LB Shaun Dion Hamilton:**

"He was very physical today. The only thing I want him to do is just be smart. He got to where he needed to be, put himself in a good position to make plays and probably just a little bit more than I would like to see as far as physicality. But, I'm not going to fault him for that. I just want him to be smart when he does front up one of his own teammates."

**On if he noticed more physicality today:**

"I just think there was physicality because I think they came out today with the right mental frame of mind. I think their attitude was what we were looking for, and I thought it started with the first tempo to begin with. So again, that to me is important. We put the ball on the ground a couple times as far as the offense was concerned, I wasn't happy about that. But I thought those guys were spotted and came back and did some good things."

**On his system being comfortable for cornerbacks:**

"We ask guys to play with vision. We had a guy back in 2013 and 2014 and 2015 who really played with tremendous vision. I'm talking about [CB] Josh Norman. He made plays doing it the way that we coached, the way we taught it. The way Jack and [defensive backs coach] Chris [Harris] and the rest of the DB coaches have done is they've put our guys in a position where they can use their vision, their eyes. They play with disciplined eyes, they give themselves a chance to make plays. That's one of the things that we're stressing, that you play with discipline. You put your eyes where you're supposed to and you believe what you see."

**On checking on DE Chase Young as he sits out of drills:**

"Absolutely, because you've got to see where his mind is. If he's not on the field learning, he's got to be in the classroom learning. That's the thing we try to do with him. And again, we want to make sure before we throw him back out there so we may be a little bit more cautious than we need to be. But, just knowing that we have three weeks before we open up, we've got to make sure that the young man's ready to play football as opposed to coming out, prancing around and doing some things on defense. We want to be smart with him, but we also want to make sure mentally he's where he needs to be. Emotionally, it's the same thing because frustration does set in. I've seen it with young guys that just want to be out there and showing everybody that he's worth the second pick of the draft."

**On if Young is still dialed in:**

"He is. I saw him this morning. We had a nice talk. It's just good to see him because he's excited. He loves being here. He's going to be a big part of what we're going to do for years to come."

**On balancing differing progress between the offense and the defense:**

"The biggest thing you have to do is—and again, I talked about this yesterday with the quarterbacks and it's true for everybody else—you've got to make sure they're making the right decisions and they're headed in the right direction. If it comes down to wide receivers running routes, you've got to make sure they're making the proper reads in terms of understanding what the coverage is and what their route combination is supposed to be, that they're converting to the route that they should be running because they've got Cover 3 or they've got

Cover 2 or they've got man. That's the thing where when we look at tape, even though one side of the ball is having more success than the other, we're sitting there going 'OK, he's running the seven, that's the route he's supposed to be running. OK, he's running the dig, he's supposed to be running the dig.' And again, it goes all the way back to the quarterback. Is the quarterback making the reads he's supposed to? Is the center calling protections out the right way? That's how you look at it. Sure, the defense is going to be ahead. It's just kind of the nature of the game. The defense tends to always be ahead of the offense."

**On if the offensive line benefits from going against the defensive line in practice:**

"Without a doubt because I could tell you right now, most of the guys on our second unit as far as our d-line in my opinion would have a chance to start for anybody else in this league. It's a very deep defensive line rotation. We're very fortunate we've got a group of guys that can be together for a while if we do this right. They can most certainly help us as we go forward. I'm excited about what it does for our offensive line as a whole because, again, playing against some of the guys we have, in my opinion you're truly playing against some quality, quality football players."

**On if he has a level of aggressiveness in practice to avoid injuries:**

"That's why you want to take it to the fine line. But at the same time, you don't want to take that aggressive nature away. You want to take the techniques that they're working on and say, 'OK, do a fly by or do a roll off or a peel off, something like that,' and the next thing you know and you're in the game and they don't know how to react. That's the fine line that we have to deal with as coaches. I've learned over the years. When I first got started, it was always about protecting the quarterback. Well, you know what, if the quarterback doesn't have a fairly good sense of what could happen, he might get overly confident and hold the ball longer than he needs to. If the defense is always peeling off, they never learn to finish. Again, there's the fine line that you've got to balance between whether or not he crosses the line or not."

**On players adjusting to less aggressive practice play:**

"It takes a little bit for them to adapt and understand that you can't do those things, that you can't practice that way."

**On if QB Alex Smith will practice in 11-on-11 drills soon:**

"Well, we'll see. I don't know if you guys saw today, but there was a breakdown in the route combination and he tucked the ball and took off running and threw on the run. Those are the kinds of things that we're looking for. Those are the things that could lead to the next step for him."

**On DB Jimmy Moreland:**

"I think Jimmy's hilarious. You watch his demeanor, the way he handles himself, there's a confidence about that young man that you like, that tells you: 'You know what, put me in any position. I'm going to come through.' That's a very favorable thing, in my opinion, when it comes to corners. He's got a good skillset, he's got good quickness, he's very alert, he plays with his eyes and for the most part there's a little discipline. Now, I say he's hilarious because every now and then Jimmy might be on another planet and just kind of over there, his eyes are everywhere, he's not focusing in on what he needs to do all the time. But, he's a very good, young football player that has the ability to go to the next level if he works at it."

**On reviewing team protocols with potential Covid-19 outbreaks:**

"Our ICO, our Infectious Control Officer, we talk all the time about what's going on, what's happening. We're always thinking about what our protocols and our next steps are. That's probably our biggest thing. We've tried to keep everything tight. I don't know if you guys know, but if we see something about what happened with another team, we post those things. We put them up. We put things up and say 'This is happening guys. Focus in on making sure we don't make those mistakes, too.' We put at the bottom 'Don't be this guy.'"

**On the special teams unit:**

“Again, one of the things that I told the guys is we want to make a commitment to special teams. You want to impress me? Do it on special teams. We’ve had a lot of guys respond. I really love the way [special teams coordinator] Nate [Kaczor] is doing things. He’s challenging the guys. Every day, one of the sessions, one of the areas is—and I don’t want to say live—I’d say full-time, competitive period. Those guys are competing. We’re not going to get a chance to have it like you would in your preseason games. So, he’s trying to make sure everybody understands that this is the segment of special teams that we’re going at in a very high, high competitive pace. I think it also starts with your specialists with your kicker, your punter, your long snapper and your returners. Those guys are special guys here. I think there’s going to be some guys that are going to be good guys that can really help us as far as gunners, as far as blockers, as far as cover guys.”

**On his concerns over Covid:**

“Again, I think it starts with each individual first and foremost. Each individual has got to be committed to doing this, and then it’s got to go to the coaching staff, the players as a whole and the organization as a whole. Everybody has to make that commitment to doing it. If everybody is committed, everybody’s paying attention, everybody’s understanding, I think it gives you an opportunity to be relatively safe. By that I mean having everybody do the testing, having everybody understand that you can’t go out to these situations that are going on out there. For me personally for my situation and circumstances, I asked the players I said: ‘Hey guys, I’m going to really, truly ask you to be disciplined because I need it.’ That I think is really important for us to understand is that, you know, we don’t just infect ourselves, we infect everybody else around us.”

**On false positives in the league:**

“Well, I think if there’s a false positive you’ve just got to go to your protocols. The protocols say you’ve got to test, test, test and then test, test, test. You’ve got to isolate. At the end of the day, you’ve got to follow those rules. Hopefully those rules are good enough for us to clear everything and make sure we’re doing things the right way. As I said earlier, too, we do pay attention to what’s happening throughout the league. We do pay attention to what’s happening in other leagues. We’ll put examples up for our players to see ‘Don’t be this team. Don’t be this guy. Let’s try to be smart, let’s try to make sure we’re doing things the right way because we can only control ourselves.’”