

WASHINGTON

FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER - LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

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Head Coach Ron Rivera

On what books he read this summer:

“I’m reading a Winston Churchill book right now called *The Splendid and The Vile*. It’s really about hunkering down for the long haul. So, there’s a lot of good messages in it about preparation and preparing and understanding that things aren’t going to be easy, they’re going to be hard, but getting everybody to rally. I found some solace in reading a book like that. I am reading one—and I’ve mentioned it before—it’s called *The Real All Americans* and it’s about the Carlisle Indian School football team, and it’s a heck of a book.”

On why he chose the books he read:

“That book I chose initially to read up on the American Indian, to read on the history of it. So, the book has been solid. I think it’s a heck of a book, it really is. I know Sally Jenkins wrote it and she did a terrific job. I’ve actually texted her a couple times about her motivation in writing the book. She’s been great about it. It’s just an enjoyable book. I’m learning a lot. Like I said, for personal reasons that book has been interesting.”

On his history of playing in close home openers:

“Making plays, that’s the truth of the matter. There are a couple of games that come to mind right off the bat that we had a chance to really kind of set things right and really go in the right direction. Probably our biggest nemesis was Seattle. Whether we played them in the home opener or we just played them period, that game was always a touchdown or less. We had an opportunity to make a big play at the end of the game, and instead we fumbled it. We had a chance to win. I go back to that one. It’s just something that you always think about because you have a rival that you’ve got to be able to beat. But, you do find solace in playing well. It’s not gratifying to lose obviously, but at least as a football team you can say, ‘We know where we are. We’re progressing.’ I like this as the home opener because these guys are the gold standard in our division. They won it last year and got into the playoffs. So, this will be a good measuring stick as far as where we are as a football team.”

On what he’s learned about facing NFC East opponents:

“Well, it’s interesting because I started my positional coaching with Andy Reid in Philadelphia and got a great sense of what those rivalries are about. And then as the years have gone on, playing teams from the NFC East has always kind of—it’s a different division. I think it’s a more traditional division than a lot of them. I think it’s kind of cool that you play these teams, you play these teams that there’s a lot of rivalry to it. To me, if you can win your division—especially this one—and Philadelphia is showing it, you get a chance to go to the playoffs.”

On if they have plans for the National Anthem on game days:

“We will. I literally just had a meeting with our team captains and we’re going to have that discussion tomorrow. The biggest thing that I just said to them, I said: ‘This has to be about respecting each other’s choice of what to do.’ I think that’s the most important thing. It’s funny because people say, ‘Oh, you should all kneel together.’ Or, ‘You shouldn’t kneel because it doesn’t show team unity.’ Well, I think that’s wrong. I think if half your team kneels and half your team stands and everybody respects that, that’s team unity. That to me really is because I am mature enough to respect your right as an American—the First Amendment—to kneel

and you respect my right to stand. That's the important thing that I think we have to get out is that some people have this thought that this is what you should do and some people have this thought that you should do. Well, guess what? The world is about compromise and about respect. If you don't respect the person's right, then you're not respecting the First Amendment. That's the way I approach it."

On if the captains will meet with the team:

"Yes. They will. They'll get together and they'll have an opportunity to express themselves and decide what they want to do as a team. But the biggest thing to me is, again, no matter what's decided, it has to be decided as a team fairly."

On determining what a successful season will be:

"That's a good question. I came out initially thinking if we were able to go through everything and see where we are, then you can make a real good—I don't want to say prediction—but have a good feel for it. The one thing I want to make sure, though, is that we play the right way. We play hard, we play physical, we play downhill, we attack. Those are the things we're looking for. I'm serious when I say we've got to give our fans something to cheer about. First, it's got to be good quality football. Then it's got to be about winning. That's what I want to see. I want to see us winning football games, but first and foremost we've got to see good football. That's the thing that we have to do. As I look at the guys that we have, I think we have a lot of good players. Now it's a matter of getting the right group on the field and having them go out and play the right way. Then the winning will take care of itself. It's interesting because my first stint at it, it was—if you go back and look at my record, I think it was 3-13 in games decided by six or seven points or less. That was because we didn't know how to win and we didn't know how to finish. I think we were afraid to put it out there. I was — Shoot, if I go back and look at it there were a number of opportunities that instead of kicking a field goal or having gone for it on fourth down and converted, we would've taken the knee and won the game. So, it's about understanding and knowing what we had to do. I learned from those two years of really just gut wrenching losses. Knowing going forward this is what I'm doing, that's kind of where the whole nickname 'Riverboat Ron' came from."

On the importance of wins and losses:

"I'm not going to put a number out there. These guys have enough pressure on them. They don't need to have a number on them. What they need to know is they have to go out and play hard and fast and physical. They do their job two things the right way, believe me winning will take care of itself. But to go out there and put a number to it, no I'm not going to write a check out to cash."

On what he is looking forward to the most on game day:

"Well, it'll start when I get up and go downstairs and have a pregame meal and kind of watch the guys filter in. Then getting to walk into the locker room for the first time, looking at my gear—all those thoughts will rush in. When I finally walk out onto the field, it'll be cool. It really will. Then we'll know that it's for real and it's time to go. I'll be excited. I really will. I look forward to it. I was talking to one of my best friends from college and he said, 'What're you looking forward to?' I said: 'Playing football. Just playing football.'"

On when a team will know how to win:

"There's a specific, confident look about them. There's a certain desire. You'll know it as a coach. It'll hit you. When I was in Carolina, it was when they came to me and said: 'Hey, let's go for this. We got this.' When they wanted it, when they wanted the ball in their hands, when they ask for it, that's when you know. That's when you know you're ready for it. Because for a while, it was easy for me to make those decisions and for them to go along with it. Then all of a sudden, Cam Newton came to me. Ryan Khalil, Jordan Gross, DeAngelo Williams—veteran guys like that came up and said: 'Hey Coach, put it in our hands and we won't let you

down.’ That’s when you know they have the confidence to go out and do it. I don’t know when these guys will have it. But, I do know they want it. We’ll see how it rolls.”

On signing K Brett Maher to the practice squad:

“[It was] for [K] Dustin [Hopkins] and for [P] Tress [Way]. He was up in Canada getting to do both the punting and the kicking. That’s what most teams are doing right now. You’re trying to find that one guy just in case you lose both your guys.”

On if the team has discussed energy on game days without fans:

“No. We haven’t. We went into the stadium and practiced it. They had a chance to hear the music—excuse me, the noise. We’re going to probably add some music there as well. But, the biggest thing they’ll have to do is just understand how to focus without the crowd, how to rise themselves up without that crowd. That’s going to be our job on the sidelines, too, as coaches. We’re going to have to get those guys riled up and going and just understand that that’s just the way it is.”

On how the captains were voted:

“That was purely by the players. We will pick one extra captain each week as an honorary captain.”

On if he feels like the team is prepared without preseason games:

“Well, the only thing I can tell you is no matter what happens, they’re ready to play. How well we play, we’ll find out. What’s made me believe they’re ready to play is the way they’ve practiced. You’re looking for them to practice as closely to game tempo as possible, and we’ve had a number of those that I’ve been pleased with. Going forward I think we’re pretty doggone close, but we won’t know until we play on Sunday. We’ll show up, we’ll go through the kickoff and we’ll see what happens.”

On QB Dwayne Haskins Jr. becoming a captain:

“I think that was cool. I really did because it just showed everybody noticed. Not just me or the other coaches or you guys or the other teammates—they all noticed. They all noticed that he’s right there, that he’s doing the things that he said he would do, the things that he and I talked about. That’s great. That’s great to see, it really was. It was a thing that—there’s a lot of gratification when you see a young man succeed and do things the right way. Now he’s got to go out and put that performance on the football field and see what happens.”

On if the game has evolved to highlight LB Kevin Pierre-Louis’s skills:

“Yeah, it has. But the number one thing I’ve learned about football – football’s cyclical. We had an era where everybody wanted to get these small receivers out and run them all over the place. Here they had the ‘Fun Bunch.’ Houston back in the day, the Oilers, had their small crew of guys. Buffalo had it. There was this push to get these smaller guys. Then what happened was people got these small, quick corners and they basically started eliminating all these small receivers. Now, you start seeing the bigger guys come back into the game. It’s a cyclical thing. This may last 10, 15 years, five years, who knows? There was an offense called the ‘run and shoot’ people tried to get into at one point in time, too. The game kind of goes with the wind. Whichever way the wind’s blowing, somebody’s going to adapt and change. This is a league of beg, borrow and steal. We watch tape from what our opponents do, we watch what people are successful with and we try to incorporate it into what we do. That’s just the nature of the game.”

On if this season feels typical:

“This doesn’t feel typical; I can tell you that much. It is what it is at the end of the day. That’s the only thing I can say about it. We’ve dealt with it. We’ve coped with it the best we can. We’re making the best of the circumstances and we’re going forward. We’re not going to quit. We’re going to show up every day, we’re

going to work hard, we're going to do the things we're supposed to and we're going to go forward. But, by no means is this typical."