

# WASHINGTON

FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER - LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

September 23, 2020

## Head Coach Ron Rivera

### **On getting QB Dwayne Haskins Jr. to where he needs to be:**

“Well, the biggest thing more so than anything else is really how we do things in practice. They get an opportunity to talk about the mistakes that were made, decisions that could have been better, that kind of stuff on Monday and then again on Wednesday. Then you get on the practice field – now you’re looking at what you want to do against your next opponent. Then they’ll talk about the decisions that will be made, why they need to be made, and then they’ll go out and practice it and just work on it. That’s all you can do right now. As I said before, without any preseason games, without any OTAs and minicamps, we are where we are because of that situation. We’ll just continue to grind away and work at it. Hopefully, eventually, things will start to fall into place.”

### **On the timeline for the team’s progress:**

“I can tell you this much, people have come to the assertion that it takes a number of reps until things become natural. Again, we kind of turned that—it takes 5,000. I don’t know if it takes 5,000, but it takes repetition, repetition, repetition. Again, remember we’re in year one. We’ve had a limited year one. This is the second time I’ve gone through it. We went through the same thing in Carolina because we had the lockout. It takes time. Hopefully we’ll get there sooner than later.”

### **On the linebackers:**

“Well, you’ve got to—this is a game where you do have to matchup. If you go back and look at the different personnel groupings that we’re playing against—last week we played against a 10-wide receiver group, 11-wide receiver group. We played against what we call 12-personnel, 13-personnel, 13-jumbo, 12-jumbo. Against Philadelphia, we played against what’s called 02, three wide receivers, two tight ends. Because of that, you try to match up. So you have your nickel package, your dime package, you have your Buffalo package, you have your base package, you have your big base. We’ve mixed it all in based on personnel groupings. Because of what we got last week, that’s what you saw on defense because we matched it up.”

### **On balancing early games without a preseason:**

“Well, we’re trying to play different groups of guys. We’re trying to shuttle in different guys and kind of give them opportunities to see what you have. If you don’t do that, you’ll never know. You know what I’m saying? It’s easy to fall back on: ‘Oh, he knows what he’s doing. He’s more of a vet.’ That type of stuff. We’re trying to mix guys in to give them an opportunity to show us what they can do. The first place to start, really, is when you’re on special teams. If you’re a young player and you go out there and do something good on special teams, we’ll recognize that for sure.”

### **On if he approaches coaching differently without the preseason:**

“No. I coach the players with what I think is best for the team.”

### **On the matchup between the defensive line and Cleveland’s offensive line:**

“What really gets me excited to see is who wins the game, to be quite honest with you. No matter how you look at it, our 11 guys have to play their 11 guys. That’s one of the things that I’ve always wondered why people

want to start talking about matchups because it goes beyond the matchup. People talk about: ‘Oh, your wide receivers match up against this DB.’ Well yeah, but at the same time the offensive line has to hold up so the pass rush doesn’t get to the quarterback and the quarterback’s got to deliver a good ball. So, matchups, yeah they’re cool. They’re fun to talk about. But for me, it’s still the 11-on-11. I don’t ever want to try to create that perception that it’s all on this group and they’re the only guys, if they don’t play well we don’t win. No, because you don’t want your guys coming and saying, ‘We’re getting our butts kicked up front.’ Well, what about what’s happening in the back? So, is it a good matchup? Yeah, it should be a good matchup. I’m not necessarily sure if it’s just about the offensive linemen. They’ve got two quality running backs. I can tell you right now, if we don’t stop the run their play-action game becomes very dangerous. [Cleveland QB] Baker [Mayfield]’s very mean, very slight-of-hand. He fakes the ball really well. He tucks it, gets himself—he arches out really nicely on those rollouts and gives himself an opportunity to square those shoulders and throw the ball down the field. There’s a lot of things that play into what they do. A big part of it is off of their running game, there’s a lot of complementary play action passes. We have to be really good about that.”

### **On divvying up reps:**

“Well, what you do really is you play the guys and find out. There’s a certain point where if a guy is not as productive as he needs to be, you move onto the next guy. He’ll have to get his reps another way. But, you’ve got to get guys opportunities to give guys chances. A great example is, again I go back to Carolina, once the decision was made that Cam Newton was going to be our guy, Cam Newton took every rep with the ones. Well, that’s what I decided with Dwayne. Since we weren’t playing any preseason games and there wasn’t going to be an opportunity to see what we could do competitively, I just decided I’m not going to stop him from getting all those reps with the ones. We’ve got to see what he can do.”

### **On G Wes Schweitzer:**

“I thought Wes did a nice job. We’ve got a good slew of offensive linemen. We’re going to be working a lot of guys. We’re going to see how things pan out and we’ll see on Sunday.”

### **On S Troy Apke’s progress:**

“Again, Troy didn’t play as well as he’s capable of. A lot of guys didn’t play as well as they’re capable of last week. But, Troy is a smart football player. He’s a savvy guy that understands. Now, there are certain things that go on sometimes in a game that may change a guy’s approach. I will tell you this much, he didn’t play as bad as people think he did. There were a couple of plays that happened that thank goodness Troy was there to make the tackle. I’m going to tell you that much right now. Because again, for the most part a lot of people don’t know what happened on that play. Everybody wants to point to the wrong person without knowing. At the end of the day, he didn’t play as well as he wanted to but he didn’t play as badly as people thought he did.”

### **On facing RBs Nick Chubb and Kareem Hunt:**

“It throws you off. I was fortunate, I had [former Carolina RBs] Jonathan Stewart and DeAngelo Williams and they’re a heck of a one-two punch. What happens is if you can grind it out with one guy and then bring the other guy in and he might do something better differently in terms of he might be a better inside runner and the other guy might be a better outside runner. The other guy might run the screen better. The other guy might be more dangerous out of the backfield. You’re constantly going in and out with these guys, now you’ve got to find a rhythm on defense on how to approach this. It gives a boost to the offense—especially the offensive line—when you’ve got a guy that all you need to do is give him a crack. They’ve got two guys that can do that.”

### **On developing a similar one-two punch in Washington:**

“I think we can develop that with our backs, period. I think we’ve got a good stable of them. We saw a little bit of it last week. We saw a little bit of it the week before. There are guys that bring something a little bit different to the table and they’ll play their roles for you. Sometimes one guy will get hot, well you want to see that hot

hand as much as possible. That's something that I think we're working toward. We feel good about our stable of backs. We really do. We think we've got a great group of young backs."

**On what concerns him about facing Cleveland:**

"Well, I think their ability to get vertical. I do. I think their wide receiver crew is a group that's really still kind of trying to find themselves. They've had three new head coaches in three years—or three different head coaches, I should say, in three years. So now, they've got a new offensive coordinator. They're still learning and still trying to figure them out. But, when you watch them go vertical, they can hit you really fast. They can give you a little bit of angst. Then their ability to run the ball. They're a big, physical group up front and they want to run the ball downhill. Defensively, I think again their pass rush is solid. They're very physical, very active along their front."

**On facing two-tight end sets:**

"With teams, sometimes you pick your poison. Who don't you want to beat you? That's what you've got to look at. That's the problem that you come across when you have a team that can get vertical with their wide receivers. Somebody's going to get left in a one-on-one situation. Some guy's going to get left to work underneath the seam. It's going to be tight ends. Again, you look at the way Philly used their receivers—you've got guys going vertical, running to the deep post, running 17-yard digs. Well, you sink to get the depth and all of a sudden the passing lane opens up underneath. That's what's happening with these guys when you look at them, especially last week against Cincinnati. I will say this, too, there are a couple times they're going to pass-pro and take a shot. They're going to put eight guys in protection and they're going to send their two best wide receivers out and one's going to run a 17-yard dig and one's going to run a post through the middle. They're going to challenge you. Eventually what's going to happen is you're going to start seeing linebackers getting 15 yards deep and now the ball gets dropped underneath. That's why it's so important that you've got to be able to shut the running game down so the play-action doesn't get to you."

**On practicing after the loss:**

"I don't think we had an issue with practice. I thought we practiced at a good tempo. We were a little sluggish at the very end, but it was really the first day of install. Like I said, the last period was sluggish but I thought everything else was good. I thought we had good energy initially. The message coming off the game really was learn. Learn from last week. There's nothing we can do about it except for learn. If we don't learn from it, we've wasted an opportunity. That's really what the message was. Like I said, I was pleased with the effort and the attitude with the exception of the last period. We got a little sluggish."

**On CB Kendall Fuller being inactive last week:**

"He wasn't ready to play physically. So, we'll see how he is as we go through today. Again, we worked. We got some work in. We'll see how he is after that. We'll check him again in the morning. I'll tell you guys this, anytime a guy that's coming off injury works on a Wednesday, you don't know how he is until you see him Thursday morning. That's really the better indication. If he comes in Thursday still good, then you'll get an opportunity to work him on Thursday and see how he is after Thursday's workout Friday morning. So, I really couldn't tell you how he is until I get a chance to talk to [Head Athletic Trainer Ryan Vermillion] in the morning and see how these guys report. I think that's the thing that everybody has to understand; if a guy works, that's great. But we won't know until the next morning."

**On if he knows what he has in the secondary:**

"No, we don't. Again, we're still trying to find it plus Kendall hasn't played yet. He was an important part of what we were putting together in training camp. Again, we'll see how he is. Hopefully we'll get an opportunity to have him play for us on Sunday."

**On the indictment of a police officer in the Breonna Taylor case:**

“Well, I will say this I’m glad that they enacted the Breonna Taylor Act. I think, again, what that’s going to do is it’s going to prevent situations like this from occurring. That’s the one thing that’s going to be, unfortunately, her legacy. She was taken way too soon. She was a bright, brilliant young lady. It’s a very unfortunate and very tragic situation. Again, I support the Black Lives Matter movement.”