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INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER - LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

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Head Coach Ron Rivera

On the decision to start QB Kyle Allen this week:

“Well, I think the biggest thing in this moment is looking at where we are in terms of our schedule and the situation and circumstances. This has been thought out by me for a while. To me, it goes back to the beginning of the schedule. We have four games coming up at the beginning that I was hoping to come out 2-of-4 going into a stretch where we play four NFC games, three divisional games—again where we can make some hay. Unfortunately, we’re 1-3. We have three divisional games coming up, four conference games and I just felt based on the things that have gone on with [QB] Dwayne [Haskins Jr.], based on his development and where he is, we’re better off putting the ball in the hands of a guy who knows our system, a guy that’s been in our system for three years, backed up by a guy who’s been in our system before and who’s a little bit of a more accomplished quarterback. This is not as much an indictment on Dwayne as much as it is an indictment on the situation and circumstances that we are in. He did not have the benefit of OTAs and minicamp. He didn’t have the benefit of four preseason games to work through things. Because of that, he’s behind in his development in this system. Again, it’s an unfortunate situation. But as we go through the first four games and look at them and break them down—I visit with the coaches, talk with the coaches, go through the games with the coaches and the things that happen. It’s just one of those things that he needs more time. We’re also, though, in a situation with what has happened in our division—it’s open. I want to take an opportunity to see what we can do.”

On if fourth-quarter situations against the Ravens contributed to the decision:

“No, but those are things that talk and speak to his development. Those are things that he’s got to grow with. My point just being that he hasn’t had the opportunity to play a lot of football, he hasn’t had an opportunity to learn a lot of football and practice a lot of football. That’s the thing that he didn’t get. He didn’t get a lot of it last year. Going into OTAs and minicamp, which were blown out of the water because of COVID, he didn’t get that. He hasn’t had the benefit of that kind of work yet. Because of it and because of our circumstances and situation, I made the decision.”

On how the divisional standings impacted the quarterback rotation:

“That’s exactly what this is. This is an opportunity to find out. We’ve got four games that are critical. They are four games that are conference games. Three of those four are divisional games. That’s what this is. This is a short-term to find out. I could’ve gone with Dwayne and who knows what would have happened. But if the negative happened, you could lose a young quarterback. Dwayne’s got an NFL arm. That’s a legit thing he has, but he hasn’t had a lot of NFL experience. You may say: ‘Well, the only way he’s going to get it is to play, and the only way he’s going to get it is if he practices.’ We missed a series of practices by not having the OTAs and minicamp and not having a regular training camp where he would’ve had four preseason games to work through things.”

On Haskins Jr.’s reaction to the quarterback change:

“Well, he was disappointed obviously. I would’ve expected a competitor to take it no other way. He wants to play. He was disappointed and I know today was tough on him. I appreciate that. I understand that. I’ve been through it myself personally. I know what it feels like. But, I think we can do a few more things. I think Kyle has been in for three seasons. He’s had some success. He hasn’t had great success, but he’s had some. That’s

what I'm looking for. I'm looking for some success. He's a guy who can manage, a guy who can control. Hopefully things will go well. We've put [QB] Alex [Smith] in position to be backup, so we'll see how that unfolds."

On why Haskins Jr. started for the first four games:

"Because we had to find out. I felt like with four games, if we could come out of those four games 2-2 going into this week, I could stay with Dwayne in spite of the situation and circumstances. But, we're 1-3. Watching the games that Dwayne played, Dwayne needs some more work. He just hasn't had enough work yet. That's the thing that I hope everybody understands. He's got a live NFL arm. But, he only played one year in college. He played very limited last year. I liked the things I saw last year. This year he played. We gave him every opportunity. We gave him all the reps with the ones. We gave him a chance to start four games and truly evaluate. But, with the division where it is right now, I'd be stupid to not give it a shot and see what happens in the next four games. But I wanted to put it in the hands of someone that knows the situation a little better, backed up by a guy that's been there."

On how Haskins Jr. responded in practice today:

"No, I don't count it as a ding to be honest with you. We all go through it. We all handle things differently. What's more important is how he comes out of it. He got a chance to practice. He took his reps in practice, he worked with the scout team, he went after practice and worked a little more, too. He was near the coaches during practice. You guys didn't get to see him in practice, and I wish some of you would've so you could've seen he got involved. He did the things he was supposed to. But, he should be disappointed. If he wasn't disappointed, I'd be concerned. He wants to play, and I get that part of it. He'll get his opportunity. But, right now we're in a situation where if we're still trying to teach one guy and the other 52 aren't given the opportunity to see whether or not we win these next four games, then that's not fair. Again, we're trying to develop a young quarterback, but we've got one eye on what's happening in our division. If somebody was 4-0 and someone else was 3-1, OK. But, there's a chance to win the division. So, we have to look at it that way. We've got four games that are very important and very vital. We'll see what happens."

On if there will be a quarterback competition long-term:

"I expect them all to compete. But, we'll see what happens with Kyle. Again, he's had some success, but it's been limited. He's won seven games for me in the past. But, that's the past. We'll see what he does this week and we'll go from there. But like I said, we have a very capable guy in the wings in Alex ready to go."

On his motivation to make a change at quarterback:

"Because you look at where everybody else is in the division: 1-2-1, 1-3, 1-3, 0-4. We haven't been as successful as I'd like us to be in those four games. I hadn't seen the growth that I was looking for in those four games. So continue to do that with a chance to step up in the division, I think I'd be wrong to try to continue to do the same thing. I want to put the ball in the hands of someone who's been in the system backed up by somebody that's been in the system as well, but is very capable and see what happens. That's what I want to do. I'm taking a shot at the short-term for the short-term glory. If we come out of this having won three of the four, we're right in the middle of it. I just think now is the chance to take that shot and see. The one thing a lot of people don't see is the frustration on the sidelines of the other players as well. I look at that and I see that. I feel that. The guys want to win. Right now, where his development is, I think our best shot to win now is with guys that have been in the system. That's what I'm doing and that's why I'm doing what I'm doing."

On evaluating Haskins Jr.:

"Is he? Is he, based on his last three games? That's what I'm looking at. I'm looking at what's happened. It's funny because everything I've seen and been told is everybody talks about him not doing this, him not doing this and him not doing this. Now I decided to do this, and—wow. So, I get it. I'm looking at these things. We

break these games down. We talk about these things. My decisions being made based on what we've seen from the last three weeks—the last four weeks, for that matter—and looking where we are. Now, I think our best chance to win is putting the ball in somebody else's hands. I think the best chance to have things done in our offense is in somebody else's hands. That's what I'm doing. I'm doing that based on what I've seen. I just think right now this is the decision I'm making. I could be wrong, or I could be right. We'll see. That's why we play the games. That's why we show up on Sunday—it's to see what happens. That's what we're going to do.”

On having Smith as a backup:

“Partly because Kyle's been working all the way through and Alex has been getting limited reps. I've got Alex next because Alex has been in the system. He understands it and I want to put the ball back in the hands of somebody who's been in it. That's my thought process through that, just to see what happens. Again, we have three capable quarterbacks. We have two guys right now that I've lined up at one and two and that's how we're going to go with it.”

On his comfortability putting Smith back on the field:

“Because there's doctors that were ready to put him back on the field as well. That's why. I've been talking to the doctors, listening to what the doctors say. That's why. If the doctor told me: ‘Oh, I wouldn't put him out.’ I wouldn't put him out there. But to have the doctors tell me what they've told me, to say what they've said—I guess based on what the doctors tell me, unless we're not going to listen to medical science.”

On the supporting cast around the quarterbacks:

“Well, it'll be the same thing for Kyle. Kyle will have the same guys out there. He'll have the same, unfair shake. We'll see how it goes. That's the thing everybody has to understand: we are who we are. The players we have are the players we have. Those are the guys we're going to play. The thing we have to understand is there's one primary position that touches the ball on every play. What we're hoping to do is develop a young quarterback. We get to a certain point where you say: ‘Wow. He's not getting it right now. We can continue to put him out there.’ Or, ‘Wow. Look at the situation we have in our next four games. Do we want to shake the dice or do we want to see if we can win them with somebody that has a little bit more experience, a little bit more time in this offense and a little bit better feel for what we do?’ That's all I'm doing. I have a guy that has a little bit better feel backed up by another guy that has a little bit better feel that have played a little bit more football and a little bit more understanding. I wish Dwayne had had the offseason. I wish he had the OTAs and minicamps. I wish he'd had the four preseason games because then he'd be further along. I told you guys it takes about 5,000 reps. He's not even close to that yet. I'm going to stress it again—the kid has an NFL arm. But right now, there's a chance. Some people might not agree with me, but that's fine. That's what this is all about. For me personally and for this football team, I'm taking my shot. I'm going to see what happens in these next four. I'm here to win. Now's an opportunity to see if we can win.”

On Haskins Jr.'s mindset:

“Well, I explained to Dwayne why I was doing the things I did. Hopefully he understands that he has not had the opportunity. It's not fair either. I get it. It's not fair. He didn't have the OTAs and the minicamp. He didn't have the four preseason games. That's not the fair part, I get it. But, the situation right now calls for us to do something different. I'm going to do something different, and I hope he understands. I hope he gets it. This is all part of the learning process. Believe me, I know what it feels like to be sat down. How he comes out on the other end, that's up to him. He can come back stronger for this, or not.”

On how the playmakers around Allen compared to the playmakers in Carolina:

“We're about to find out. Again, he's going to have the same thing that Dwayne had. That's the thing that we're going to go with. We can only play the guys we have. I'm not trying to compare him to what he did in Carolina. I'm just saying, he knows the offense. He's been in the system. Now, he may get the same reaction. The players

may play the same way they played for Dwayne. Again, that's no mark on Dwayne. That's no mark on Kyle. These are the guys that we have, and we're going to play the guys that we have. We're going to win with the guys we have and we're going to lose with the guys we have. I really think in all honesty this is what it is. This is who we are. We're going to show up on Sunday and we're going to play as hard as we can and we'll find out."

On if he spoke to Dan Snyder about the quarterback change:

"I don't tell anybody what I'm thinking. I don't want anybody to think people are telling me what to do. I thought about this as we were beginning to go into the beginning of the year and I looked at the schedule and I said: 'Wow. Our first eight games are very telling.' Because, in our first eight games, we play everybody in our division and we play one team twice. I thought: 'Wow, shoot, you can win those four.' Then I looked at the beginning and I said: 'Wow, if we can come out 2-for-4, alright. We'll see what happens.' Again, those are the things that I have to think about as the head coach. Those are the things that I have to map out right, wrong or indifferent. But just so you know, that's what I'm doing. Now, I did talk to Mr. Snyder. I explained to him what I wanted to do. I explained to him why I wanted to do it and he was very supportive. He told me: 'Ron, it's your football team. Those decisions you're going to make; you're going to live with those decisions.' I said, 'Yes, sir, I am.' Then he said: 'Well, I'm all supportive and I'm behind you 100 percent.' That's it. That was our conversation just so everybody knows. These are the things that I thought about. I went to our [offensive] coordinator [Scott Turner] and I asked: 'What do you think, what's going on, what's happening?' He said: 'Coach, he's got a long way. It's tough, he's been learning.' I explained it to Scott, and Scott thought it's not a bad idea. We're putting the ball in the hands of somebody that knows the system better, that's been through the system for three years. That's what we're doing and we're trying to create ways to win. We think this is a good opportunity for us to win."