

WASHINGTON

FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER - LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

November 5, 2020

Head Coach Ron Rivera

On T Geron Christian Sr.:

“Geron has done some good things for us. Right now, he’s on the injury report so we’ll see how things come out whenever he’s on the field. But he’s done some good things, though.”

On defensive coordinator Jack Del Rio:

“I like his approach. Jack and I come from the same era, so we’re both a little on the crusty side. He’s a tough taskmaster. He gets on the guys. I like that, I really do. I like his approach to the game. The one thing that Jack and I have a mutual respect for—and I will say this—this guy’s had a lot of success. To have a guy like that with us right now helping us lay the foundation defensively for us, I’m pretty excited about that.”

On if the staff self-evaluated during the bye week:

“I did and felt good about it. I think I got enough out of it that going forward there’s some stuff that we have to correct and work on get better at.”

On what they self-evaluated:

“I’m not going to elaborate on that. That stuff we keep in-house because that’s stuff that we look at and say: ‘OK, this area we’ve got to get better at. We’ve got to get better at this type of situational football.’ That’s stuff I don’t want our opponents to know.”

On his ‘Ubuntu’ t-shirt:

“The word is ‘Ubuntu.’ It basically stands for: ‘I am because we are.’ It’s a little bit of an idea that [RB] J.D. McKissic and I talked about last week. It’s something that I’ve actually read about. The whole attitude and idea is that to the success of the individuals, the responsibility of the team and the success of the team is the responsibility of the individual.”

On the team coming together to build a new culture:

“I felt comfortable with the things that we’ve done. I think the guys are buying into the way we need to do things, the way we need to practice. I think the thing we’re trying to do is get guys that are like-minded, that share vision, that share the process. I like what [G] Brandon Scherff said after the Dallas game, and that is: ‘I talked to the guys about the process.’ Everybody talks about the process of building, building, building—well, at a certain point the process has to end. Now, the rest of it starts to take over. That’s kind of where I think we are. I thought we had a really good couple of months leading up to where we are. I feel very comfortable and confident the guys understand what we want from them. As we go through this, we’re going to go through bumps. We’re going to go through ups and downs and also some really good periods and some really low periods. It’s all a part of growing. Each thing that we do I believe is just another part of growing. I’m pretty excited about where we are right now.”

On how to play well after a bye week:

“Well, don’t go off my record because I think I’m 50-50 or close to it or something like that. The thing about it, really, is to me, again, is the approach has to be this is a game we’re about to play and a very important game

we're about to play. Why? Because it's the next one we play. I don't think you can get too wound up about it or too laissez about it. I think you have to just focus in and treat it as the next game you're about to play."

On if he evaluates his gut feelings:

"Yes. Again, when we talk about gut let's be very specific about my experience. This is—not that it matters for some of you folks—but this is my 35th year in the league. I'd like to believe that my experience, my past experiences, are going to help me make decisions. Now, we do an evaluation. Our analytics guys along with [Senior Vice President of Football Administration] Rob Rogers, we will sit down on specific days and we'll go through certain things and we'll go through certain decisions that are made. Not just my decisions, but we look at the decisions that are made throughout the league. We'll talk about it. We'll put a video together, we'll go through that video. It's an opportunity for us to look at decisions that I've made and decisions that other coaches made. Hopefully, that can help us be clearer when we get into those kinds of situations that we've thought about. I have a checklist that I go through as well that I look at prior to each game. In that checklist, it talks about situations and circumstances that may come up and what those decisions are. Part of it will be, and again, here's a great example and we've talked about it: when you're on the road and you score at the very end of the game, I believe you go for two. Now at home, what do I believe? Well at home, I'm going to give a little insight to it. Look at the way we're playing, look at what the defense has done and look at past experiences. That should help me make a good decision and we'll go from there."

On if he rethinks past decisions:

"Well, I will say this: do I think through things once they're done? Yeah, I do. But at the end of the day, I'm going to be true to who I am and I'm going to stick to my guns. Now, eventually if I look at it and certain things happen like you're saying certain trends and they haven't been positive, maybe I need to rethink it. That's really, I think, part of the process of me going through decisions that I've made in the past. When I sit down and talk with our analytics guys, when I sit and talk with Rob: 'Hey, maybe I need to reevaluate. Maybe I need to rethink.' So, yeah. To your point, yes."

On how Del Rio is able to turn around defenses:

"I will say this, just in watching him he's demanding. There's a certain discipline to the way he coaches, which I think is really important in this league. I'm not saying not all coaches enforce discipline, but there's just something about guys that have had experience and had success in the past. When you step to the forefront of a unit and guys sit there and say: 'Dang, this dude coached with Baltimore when they won the Super Bowl. He coached Ray [Lewis]. This guy was in Jacksonville and had this kind of defense. He goes to Oakland and has this kind of defense. When he was in Denver with John Fox, they had this kind of defense.' So, he's got as they say a lot of skids on the wall. I think that really carries credence with these players. If you show them you know what you're doing, you show them you care about them being successful, I think that helps. I think that's one of the things Jack does."

On if the defensive line has performed as he envisioned:

"It's having the impact that you would envision. But to be honest, I think it could be better. I really do. I think it's a good, young group that's still learning and growing and figuring their way out. There are still some elements of learning that they have to do, some bad habits that we've got to get corrected. When I say bad habits, some techniques that they used to use in a different style. This is a completely different defense. So, we've got to get them to learn those techniques and learn those habits and develop them. You guys heard me say it, it takes about 5,000 reps before things start to get different. We're not even close yet. We've still got a lot of work to do. We've still got a lot of practice to do and developing and growing to get this team to where we want it to be."

On if his approach facing the Giants changed after this year's first matchup:

“I wouldn’t say the approach is necessarily different. Again, it’s a divisional game so I think those things take care of themselves. People say: ‘Oh, you’ve got to gear up. You’ve got to get fired up.’ No, you don’t. This is the division. This is one of our rivals, one of our archrivals. So, I think our guys, their perspective and outlook on this game is in the right place. Coaching-wise, schematic-wise, we have some ideas of things we want to do. Are they similar to what we did last time? Some of them are. Are they different? Yeah, some of them are. Our approach I think is really where it needs to be because this is a division rival.”

On if Doc Rivers and the Celtics influenced his ‘Ubuntu’ shirt:

“Yeah, it has a lot to do with it. As I said, I had a conversation with J.D. McKissic and he actually brought to my attention what Doc Rivers did. We had a great discussion. Now, this is something I had looked up and researched a year ago and thought this was something I would like to do some day. When J.D. and I talked about it, we said: ‘You know what, let’s sit down and talk to the guys about it.’ Which we did. We’ll see how it goes.”

On if he was able to coach the way he would have liked to through his recovery:

“I think each day I’m getting better and better at it. I’m still taking medicine. To be very honest, I still nap before practice. I get in—I’m getting back to my normal practice schedule—I get in early, 6 a.m. time or somewhere in there. I get tired earlier. I still take a quick nap before I get on the practice field, get my energy back up. I’m starting to get mixed in with the players a little bit more. It’s starting to be coaching again for me, personally. It really is. I struggled with having to do things that I did the last few weeks. So being where I am today, believe me, is really refreshing. It really is.”

On WR Steven Sims Jr. returning to practice:

“To be honest with you, he worked, he looked good, we’ll see how he is tomorrow morning. Again, and I’ve said this, guys coming back from injuries—you’ve always got to see how he is the next morning and see the degree and see how he practices. But he’s done a nice job. What we missed, we missed that underneath guy that works the underneath and takes a little bit of the pressure off of [WR] Terry [McLaurin] and [WR] Cam [Sims] and [TE] Logan [Thomas]. When you don’t have that presence that’s there, it kind of changes your approach. It changes the targeting of the quarterback. It changes the offense’s calls. Hopefully, he’s back. We’ll see how it goes. But like I said, he’s done a nice job. He’s worked in and out a couple times. We’ll see how he is tomorrow after as much work as he got today.”

On what he tells young players to learn from the first divisional opponent game:

“The biggest thing you talk about is knowing you’ve got to play these guys twice a year. So, make sure you have a book on everybody. Make sure you have a feel for what they do. For the most part, a lot of teams in your division are going to attack you the same way, especially if they have success. That’s the thing that they’ve got to look at. Look at the things they did, look at the success they had and then you can anticipate them coming back with it. It’s interesting because [DE] Chase [Young] was just coming back from injury. He didn’t play to the degree he wanted to. I promise you, his outlook and preparation this week has been really good.”

On how growing up in a military family shaped his leadership style:

“Probably the first thing I learned is there’s a chain of command. Everything starts from the top and works its way down. One of the things that I did learn, too, is about taking responsibility. No matter what happens, if you’re in charge and something happens, you’re responsible. No matter where the mistake came from, it always starts with you. That’s something I’ve always tried to make sure everybody understands. The responsibility is mine and I accept it. I think part of it, too, is there’s a certain discipline that you grow up with growing up on an army base, living on a military base throughout the world for that matter. You understand that there is a discipline that’s expected. Then there’s the esprit de corps, the companionship, the friendships, the spirit that you have for being—I’ll say it—for being an army brat, for growing up on army bases. I kind of feel the same

way now being on a football team. There's a certain element to us that I think is really cool that you can only have when you're part of a team. I think being a military kid, an army brat, has really helped shape me."

On if he's had conversations with players about Salute to Service and supporting the military:

"We have. I have. It's a very natural thing around here, it really is. Unfortunately, with the COVID situation, we haven't had the opportunity to do the things that we would do and that I would normally do. I am looking for those opportunities to get back in touch with the military folks."

On the next step for Young to increase his sack numbers:

"To continue to work at it. He can't get frustrated because that's one of the things that happens with young players. They want to explode onto the scene. First of all, he plays a position where they're going to pay attention to him. He's a rush end, so they're going to know where he is. Typically, one of their best players is going to be assigned to him. Like he has in the past, he's going to get chipped. He's going to get doubled. They're just not going to let him go screaming off the edge. So, there's a lot for him to work through and learn and understand. He's growing. I will tell you, and I know you guys don't get to see it, the way he practices is pretty impressive."

On the team learning how to win:

"I think the biggest thing is, and I talked about it, you learn to win because you play to win. Now you've got to learn to win by practicing to win. I asked the guys and made a comment about it today: 'There's a little thing about how you practice. Did you practice like a champion today?' We're seeing it. We're seeing our practices have been getting better. They're not where they need to be and they're not where they should be. We're going to work to get those things up because they have to understand that you take what you put onto the practice field into the game field. We have some veterans that practice the right way. We have some young guys that practice the right way. Terry McLaurin is a great example of a young guy. Brandon Scherff and [T] Morgan Moses are examples of older guys that practice the right way. We've got to get everybody practicing the right way. I talked about it today, guys that are on the show team—you can't think about it as a hassle: 'Oh, I've got to go on the show team.' No. If I'm on the show team, now's a time for me to work my skillset. Now's a chance for me to improve my technique. It's also a chance for me to help give a good picture and a good look for my teammates."

On what having fans back to FedExField will mean to the players:

"I think probably the biggest thing that I really do appreciate—and I can't wait to have a full stadium here—has been this fanbase. Most of my appreciation has come as an opponent. I know walking into this stadium when there's a crowd, it's not easy. That's one thing that you can always rely on as a player, especially when you're winning, that your home crowd is going to be there and they're going to be behind you. They're going to be fired up, they're going to get after the opponent, they're going to cheer and know when not to. That you can draw energy from. When you make a big play and something great happens and the crowd erupts, that energy level is just crazy. It's been kind of strange because the first time against Philadelphia walking in and not having anybody there, to be honest with you, once the game started I wasn't really aware the crowd wasn't there until there was a lull. Then, most recently, against Dallas when we had friends and family, that was pretty awesome because you could hear the friends and family. The families were making some pretty good noise. I'm excited. I know it's going to be a limited number this week, about 3,000 folks. With the friends and family, which was somewhere around 500, making the noise they did, I can only imagine what 3,000 is going to sound like. Like I said, I can't wait to have 80,000 in that stadium because it's going to be pretty awesome."