

# WASHINGTON

FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER - LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

November 9, 2020

## Head Coach Ron Rivera

### **On QB Kyle Allen:**

“Kyle has an ankle injury. He’s going to see the doctors today, and we’ll go from there.”

### **On if Allen will need surgery:**

“Well, he’s going to see the doctors about his surgery and see exactly what happens. It might be a little premature to say he’s out for the year, but, again he’s going to have to see the doctors and they’re going to have to do all the decision making with those things.”

### **On playing three different quarterbacks this season:**

“I don’t think it’s difficult as much as just a process of seeing what we have. I think that’s the most important thing is to see what we have going forward. I think the thing about [QB] Alex [Smith] right now is you have a guy that’s a very veteran quarterback who has helped and nurtured some very young quarterbacks. He kind of showed these guys how to study and prepare for a game, how to handle it. I think this is going to be very good for [QB] Dwayne [Haskins Jr]. I think Dwayne’s going to get an opportunity to see truly how to prepare for a game as a starter. Again, I think—and hopefully Dwayne will take it that way—this is an opportunity to learn and grow. Then, who knows? He may get his opportunity again shortly. He’s just got to be ready and prepare as if he’s one play away.”

### **On the run defense yesterday:**

“Again, the thing we talk about is gap integrity. You get in your crease, you hold that crease and you’re responsible for that crease. This defense has been very, very successful over the years. What it really takes is for guys to buy in and understand this is how you play the defense. You get into your crease and you hold your crease. As we work our way vertically to the quarterback and there’s a run, you become disruptive. That’s the thing that we have to do and what we’ve got to do to be successful as a football team.”

### **On his guiding principle in starting Smith:**

“We’re in the same situation. Nothing has really changed in the NFC East other than we’ve lost the tiebreaker now to the Giants. As we go forward, we have to see what happens with the rest of the division. It’s still a close race.”

### **On balancing Smith’s performance with his comeback story:**

“Well, he helped account for 20 points. In the second half, we had well over 250 yards of offense, I believe. Granted, we had three interceptions that he threw. One of them, [RB] J.D. [McKissic] tripped and the other ones he tried to force things to happen. Again, that’s because we were kind of in desperation mode. It’s hard to fault a guy who’s trying to make something happen when you’re in desperation mode. It’s unfortunate that it happened. Again, he’s probably still a little bit rusty. We’ll see how he is this next coming week because he’ll be the primary quarterback getting primary reps. So, we’ll see. We’ll get an opportunity to judge him then.”

### **On not getting discouraged:**

“Mostly because we’re still in it. Let’s be realistic—what’s the best record in our division? See my point? Keep your fingers crossed. You just never know. But at some point, you have to win football games. That’s the truth of the matter. I don’t get discouraged because when I look at the roster—and I can go over it with you right now—you can see how many young guys are playing. Guys that have one, two, three years of NFL experience and that’s it. I believe the number’s right in between 25 to 28 players that we’re playing that have first, second and third-year experience. That’s important, why? Because going forward, those guys will have game experience, legitimate game experience, under their belt and that’s going to make them better. I’m going to give you an example of a guy—look at [WR] Cam Sims. Look at what he’s done. Look at [LB] Cole Holcomb. I can sit there and go down the list of the guys and tell you. There’s a reason for optimism. At least I am. Maybe I’m overly-optimistic, but that’s just how I feel. When I sit here and look at these names I go: ‘Wow, these are some young guys that are playing. These are guys that don’t have a lot of NFL experience going out there right now and gaining that NFL experience that’s going to help us.’ I really believe that. Like I said, though, maybe I’m a little bit overly-optimistic.”

**On believing in Smith at the beginning of the season:**

“I believe we’re in this juncture because of the way we are, just so everybody’s clear on that. I was hopeful that Dwayne would continue to learn and grow, which he is. But right now, I chose to go a different direction with a guy that’s very familiar with our system. But unfortunately, he’s hurt. We have the ball in a veteran guy’s hands, a guy that I saw who was working out very, very hard and was trying to come back. Everything that I had seen in terms of the reports that I was getting from the doctors were positive, that this is a guy who has a chance. Given who he is and the way he came back, it doesn’t surprise me to a degree that he’s got an opportunity and he earned an opportunity. We’ll see how it goes. Like I said, things may change depending on where we are as a football team and where we stand as a division. But for right now, we’re still in the middle of it.”

**On evaluating the defense in short-field situations:**

“That’s all part of the evaluation process because that happens in the game at any point in time, is you’ve got a short field. You’ve got to be able to bow your neck and force field goals or take the ball away. That’s part of it, so we’re going to evaluate it based on that as well. Sudden changes are a part of this game, and if you can’t handle sudden change consistently, then you’ve got to figure out why and where the issue is and get those things corrected.”

**On where he would like to see improvement:**

“I think, again, first and foremost we’ve got to evaluate ourselves as coaches, make sure we’re putting these guys in the best position to have success. I’ll always say that because that’s a part of it. During the game, are we making adjustments to help these guys? Are we, as coaches, seeing what’s happening in the game and getting those corrected on the sidelines? Then, after the game when we get a chance to evaluate—and today’s a day of evaluation—what exactly happened, why it happened, and what needs to get corrected so it doesn’t happen again. Those are the things that we as coaches have to look at, we have to decide on and we have to implement. There were certainly things in the game that I would like to see us do better. Then, there were some things that we perhaps could’ve changed as coaches. Again, the process is a two-fold process. It’s what we see and what we change in the game and what we see afterward and change going forward.”

**On areas of improvement that stand out:**

“It changes a little bit. Like, yesterday on the defensive side, we had a situation where we struggled stopping the run at certain times. That was disappointing. We tried making some adjustments that didn’t stick as well as we would’ve liked to, and that’s a little bit of an issue. At times on the offensive side, we weren’t as good as we’d like to be running the football. Again, it doesn’t allow our play action to be as effective as we would like it to be.”

**On if they will sign a third quarterback:**

“Well, you know, it’s something that we’re going to decide on and talk about. We’ll make our decisions as we go forward.”

**On how Haskins Jr. handled the last couple months:**

“I think he’s handled it well. Again, all those things that come and go—it’s all part of it. It’s all part of being mature and handling it, and I thought he’s handled the circumstances and situations pretty good. I know he’s very aware of now this is an opportunity for him going forward.”

**On Smith’s dedication:**

“His work ethic, I think, is legendary in terms of throughout his career he’s done it. That’s just the way he’s been. Those are the types of guys that have success and have long careers. It reminds me of Philip Rivers, who’s still playing. Philip was one of those first-ins and last-outs when I was with the Chargers for four seasons. That’s what I saw. I would be pulling into the parking lot somewhere around 5-ish and, low-and-behold, here comes Philip. That’s just the way he is and who he is as a player, and that’s who Alex is. Alex is an early guy and a late guy. He does everything that you’re supposed to do, and he does it the right way.”

**On what Haskins Jr. can learn from Smith:**

“Again, it’s really about how to prepare, how to take what you’re getting—the information that you’re getting—how to disseminate it and then how to transfer it onto the field. How to do those things. Again, my example of coming in early, meeting with the coaches, meeting with the other quarterbacks, having discussions, talking about what you’re seeing and not seeing. Just studying and preparing. I think that’s important. I think that’s vital for a young quarterback to have those kinds of examples.”

**On if preparation is innate:**

“I think it’s a little—it’s something that some guys grow and develop and understand how important it is. A lot of times, guys will rely on their great talent. That talent will get you by for a while, but there’s a point in everybody’s career where everything catches up to talent. The only thing that separates it are the guys that work the hardest.”

**On if mistakes in practice showed up in the game:**

“Well, it’s no different in practice then what happens in the game. Guys do jump off in practice, especially when you hard-count them, trying to get them to understand it. Unfortunately, it carried over. [DE] Montez [Sweat] jumped. If you get a chance to look at that tape, watch the right tackle. The right tackle actually flinches, and the referees missed that. I’m being serious. I’m not trying to make an excuse; I’m just being serious. The right tackle flinches noticeably, and that’s why Montez jumped off. Again, I think we need to be careful when we talk about stuff like that. But take a look at that play, and you’ll see their right tackle flinched. Again, in practice, you can’t really tackle. You can if you want, but this time of year you’re really not tackling.”

**On a long-term quarterback:**

“Well, that’s the question we have to answer as coaches. Is our franchise quarterback here? Is he on the roster? Is he being developed, or is he somewhere else? Again, we’ll continue to go through that and look at it and evaluate it and see exactly where we are.”

**On what he would like to see from Haskins Jr.:**

“That’s a great question. That’s something that we’re hoping to see. We’re hoping to see a guy with a talented arm who’s a good pocket passer who has the ability to make the throws. But, does he put it all together? Does it sit there and say: ‘OK. This is what I’ve studied, this is what I’ve learned. Now I’m taking it to the field. This is

what I see out there that's happening and this is what I see when I go through my progression and move this way and deliver the ball over here.' That's the thing that we want to see and he's got to continue to grow on and become a more astute player and student of the game. He's got the skillset. I'm telling you, the arm is legit. Now, let's see him put it all together. That's what I'm hoping to get out of Dwayne for the next few weeks and as we go forward for the rest of the season."