

WASHINGTON

FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER - LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

November 18, 2020

QB Alex Smith

On the Lions game:

“I think, looking back on it, a number of plays that we didn’t make or left out there are errors that really swung that game. Certainly, there were plenty of chances to win it, especially in that first half that we really let get away. Four trips down, basically into the redzone, and only scoring three points. A little bit frustrating in that sense. Also, obviously, I was pumped the way we came out in the second half and played and really fought back. Same thing, though, with all that. There were still some missed opportunities out there. I think encouraging, though. There were a lot of things to build off of. A lot of things to grow. We’re still young with so many young guys playing, so that is encouraging. For me, it’s the most comfortable I’ve felt. It has been a steady progression all the way forward going back to camp, all of the steps I felt I’ve taken, with Sunday being another one starting. So, I think same thing. Definitely a lot to build off of for myself and get better at. I’m excited for this week to do that. A new challenge and will hopefully take another step.”

On if he feels he is the same player he was before injury:

“The other two appearances coming off the bench and different circumstances, being down in both of them and not a complete game—having the preparation all week to go out there and then to play the whole game, I look at it and really be critical with myself. I really felt like I kind of checked another box that I’m capable of winning and playing football in this league. It’s a matter of doing that consistently, though. Like I said, still plenty to build off of and grow. For me, definitely another level of comfort there knowing what I am capable of. I felt really good out there in all those situations that come up through the course of a game. I’m excited, like I said, moving forward into this week and the challenge that it brings.”

On the support he has received throughout his comeback:

“It’s not something that I’m thinking a ton about in this moment in the middle of the season. We’re still locked in, and rightfully so. But it is something that is humbling. I know, for so long when I was stuck in a hospital bed or stuck in a wheelchair, how much I watched a lot of videos and countless hours of watching service men and women at the Service Center for the Intrepid do workouts that hopefully I was going to be able to do one day. I spent a lot of time looking up [Cowboys LB] Jaylon Smith and the brace that he wore and how he did it. There were definitely people that provided that same inspiration for me when I was going through it. You hope to pass that on. If so, that’s obviously a great thing. Like I said, I’m humbled by it.”

On helping younger receivers:

“Maybe a little bit of both. I think you’re always trying to do that as a quarterback. I think the more you can keep those big moments, those big situations, I think you can keep the focus on the football and the details and not get kind of hijacked or distracted by the situation. I think that’s something I try to practice myself and tell myself. Most definitely, I think having been through a lot of situations, I think there’s more comfort as an older guy. You try to help those young guys out and keep it about football and the details of us going out there and executing.”

On how to start faster on offense:

“I’m going to be careful to say it was a slow start because I really felt like we came out—I know we had the one drive we went three-and-out, but the rest of those drives, we moved field position. We got down into positions to score. Really, I thought every drive was different in the fact that we didn’t finish it off. But if you looked at the time of possession, if you looked at the yardage totals, the first downs—we came out and executed. Certainly, we had some lapses in key and critical moments that really allowed us to only score three points. Distinctly going into halftime and when we came out and they scored, I was thinking that we were playing pretty well on offense and we were down 24-3. Sometimes that happens. I think it’s a great lesson to how important situational football is. You get down into the redzone, some of those key third downs—taking a sack on that first third down was a critical error and cost us points, how important that stuff is because the margins are so small in this league. I didn’t feel like we started out slow, though, to answer your question. I thought we came out, were moving it and were dialed in. The difference in the second half clearly being that we finished those off and found a way to get into the end zone.”

On how changes at the tackle position affects him:

“I think when the ball’s snapped and you’re playing, it is something there on the fly, especially that last series knowing [T] Morgan [Moses] is moving over. We’re all adjusting on the fly. If anything, you’re always conscious of trying to be mindful of where you are in the pocket and depth and things like that to help all your linemen. You’re really just playing. Those guys, obviously credit to them and the guys up front and what a job they did.”

On the anniversary of his injury:

“To have been here with football all day, I’m very aware that it was two years to today of the break. I think you just take a moment when you do to certainly appreciate everything about where we are, certainly as a family how lucky we are. I’m grateful for so many things. Certainly, to be in this position again I didn’t think was ever possible for a long time. I’m grateful for that along with a lot of other stuff. I think you do take a moment. It is a good reminder to look around at how lucky you are, how lucky I am.”

On if anyone’s support stood out:

“Certainly, it’s tough to get any bigger than the former president [Barack Obama]. Obviously, that was humbling again. I don’t know. I try to not think about a lot of that stuff. I just try to keep my head down, and that’s really been my mindset throughout this entire process. I’m just really focused on the next step. Like I said, though, there were so many people that I drew inspiration from. If I’m ever able to pass that forward, obviously I would love to.”

On how he has improved over the years:

“I think you’re always trying to get better at everything. I don’t think that ever stops as a quarterback. As I’ve gone through different phases of trying to get back, certainly you bring up a great point. I’m trying to hear feedback, especially from people that were around me a lot pre-injury and what did they see. It was crazy that my first playing time, [Rams offensive coordinator] Kevin O’Connell was on the sideline. My next playing time, [Giants QB] Colt McCoy was on the other sideline. Then even this last week, [Lions QB] Chase Daniel who was with me for three years. All of those guys I did make a point to find at some point or text and just try to get some critical feedback. For me, obviously, people that were around me a lot before the injuries—I think anytime you’re a little self-conscious or you overanalyze things. I appreciate that feedback from people and that point of view, another set of eyes. I think to this point, I felt really comfortable out there Sunday going out and executing the offense. That’s what your role is as a quarterback to go out there and execute one play at a time. I didn’t feel hindered in that in any way. So, certainly, trying to get better in all areas at this point.”

On if he notices how much he throws during a game:

“No, I knew the way the game went a little bit that it’s the same thing. You dig yourself into a little bit of a hole, you’re going to be in a game like that. There are a lot of statistics that people try to correlate to wins and losses. There’s a lot of ways to win football games. I think the biggest thing is if you are trying to throw the football, you are efficient. Completions, obviously you’re spreading the ball around and making plays. I think that’s important. Luckily, we were able to do that for most of the game. I thought we were efficient in the pass game. We had a high completion percentage, especially until that last drive and clipping off a decent margin per attempt. I think anytime you can be efficient, run or pass, that is important. You don’t always know the way the game’s going to go. I think that’s a sign of, at least last Sunday the way that it went, that we were keeping good balance. Anytime you’re getting down three scores, you’re obviously going to be a little bit one-dimensional.”

On throwing for a career-high 390 yards against the Lions:

“I had no idea. I had no idea about any of that stuff until after the game, which is great. When you’re in the game, you don’t want to be in that stuff or thinking about your stats. I knew we were spreading it around. I felt good in the pass game that we were making plays. I just obviously had no idea about the yardage.”

On working with the younger receivers:

“Besides going out there and making plays when you’re throwing it to them, that’s obviously the first and foremost. I think we have such a great group on this entire team in the locker room, but certainly I feel like the young guys at the skill positions on offense bring such great energy every single day. These guys love football. They’ve got a smile on their face. They love going out there and making plays. They want the ball. I think all of that is infectious energy as a young guy. I feel lucky to be around them. It does rub off. I’m having a lot of fun with that. I think that is a strength, that youth and energy. You go out there and enjoy your part in it going out there and distributing the football.”

On being efficient with a pass-heavy offense:

“I think, first off, that starts up front. Every time you get into these one-dimensional situations, it’s tough on the guys up front. I think it’s really a credit to them. To throw the ball and have 55 attempts and I think there were only two sacks, one really for a yard, I think starts with those guys up front. They’re in a tough situation. To play the way they’ve been playing really is a credit to them. And then the guys outside. It’s the details. So much of the passing game is really about the details and timing. I think all these guys having a great understanding of how we all fit into that and together, if we’re doing our job right, somebody’s going to be making a play.”