

WASHINGTON

FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER - LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

November 24, 2020

Head Coach Ron Rivera

Opening statement:

“Just before we get started, I just wanted to let everybody know that thoughts and prayers are out for [Cowboys Strength & Conditioning Coach] Markus Paul and his family. Markus is the assistant strength coach for the Dallas Cowboys, who fell ill today from an apparent heart attack. He is at the hospital and we’re praying for him and a speedy recovery. We’re praying for him. Markus and I were teammates back in the day with the Chicago Bears. Just wanted to relay that message of thoughts and prayers.”

On feeling the ebbs and flows of a rivalry:

“Every rival is pretty juiced up, but you can feel the ebbs and flows. One thing is, if you’re not playing very well and they’re not playing very well, you can always count on this being the type of game that could help fire them up. You’ve got to approach this game believing that they’re going to give you their best.”

On how CBs Kendall Fuller and Ronald Darby complement each other:

“You feel good about who they are. They’re both wily veterans, guys that have been through the ringer. They both know what it’s like to have success and have some tough times. They’re both football players that play very well. They both have a different style, a different type of skillset. But at the end of the day, they’re both good players.”

On Paul as a teammate:

“Markus was a very bright, smart football player. He had good size, good range, good athleticism. He was a physical football player. Just a good teammate and a good person. It was a little bit of a shocker to hear that. As I said, thoughts and prayers go to him and his family.”

On the Cowboys offensive line:

“Well, a lot of times guys, they move out and by moving a guy out to one spot and plugging in someone else at that other spot, you might be putting a better football player on the field. That’s potentially what might have happened with Dallas. By moving things around, they might have put a better football player on the field. So, that might be what has happened with the offensive line.”

On QB Alex Smith’s documentary about his recovery:

“Alex did it for a couple reasons, obviously. I think one of the things was really to highlight where he went. I believe the [Center for the Intrepid] in Texas that supports the military. I do know that Alex has started a charity that’s helping to raise funds for that. So, I know that was part of why he did it. When you see that thing and you know who he is, and I’ve gotten to know who he is, it doesn’t surprise me. It really doesn’t. He’s a very competitive guy, a very driven young man, and a guy who when he sets his mind to something, he can do it. He can accomplish it. It says a lot about him individually and it also says a lot about the human body and what the human body is capable of. It’s an amazing comeback story. It truly is. I don’t know if I’ve ever seen anything like that. I’ll tell you this, I had [LB] Thomas Davis back in Carolina when he had his third knee surgery and came back to have the career that he had. This to me is very impressive. Very impressive.”

On the offensive line:

“First and foremost, I think it speaks to all the coaching based on what I know about [offensive line] Coach [John] Matsko and [assistant offensive line] Coach [Travelle] Wharton. It’s a good tandem of coaches. They’ve done a nice job. It says a lot about who these young men that they’re buying into the style of coaching, that they’re doing things the right way, that there’s a group of young men that are willing to listen to mix and match and show some position flex that I talk about a lot. It also says something about [C] Chase [Roullier], that Chase hasn’t missed. I think it’s one of those things that as you go forward, you just know that if we can keep this group of guys together and add on as guys get healthy that this could be a good group as we go forward. If that’s true, it’s going to take a little bit of pressure off of us as we go into the offseason and get ready for the draft.”

On G Brandon Scherff:

“He has a huge impact on what we’re trying to do, mostly because if you’re going to have a guy at a position and have a guy at the position for a while, you don’t have to worry about that guy. You feel good about that.”

On RB Antonio Gibson on the goal line:

“Again, we’ve kind of done it from the beginning. We gave him opportunities in the Philly game, and it’s paid off. Because of that, I think that’s really what’s happened. You get into a game and you don’t know really what’s going to happen. All of a sudden, he does it and he shows he has a knack for the goal line. He’s got an innate ability to find that crease. He runs behind his pads. I know it’s an expression, but he runs with some power. He runs physically. He’s not going to get arm tackled. Very rarely does he get arm tackled. He’s got that skillset that you’re looking for in a back. Quite honestly, [RB] Peyton Barber has the same type of skillset. We were fortunate that we have a couple of backs that do have a good nose for the goal line.”

On playing on Thanksgiving:

“Honestly, Thanksgiving is Thanksgiving. To get an opportunity to play on it, it’s cool. I’ve coached in them, I’ve played in them, I’ve watched them as a kid, I’ve watched them now. It’s more of a tradition. It’s kind of cool to get the opportunity to do it. I did it in 2015 when I was in Carolina. We went down and played Dallas down there. I think it’s a heck of a deal.”

On if he spoke to DE Chase Young about taking a knee during the anthem:

“No, I haven’t. Again, the biggest thing we have to understand is that it doesn’t matter who the young man is that takes a knee. The young man is exercising one of his rights. It’s his freedom of expression and freedom of speech. As far as I’m concerned, if you want to know, as the player. As far as I’m concerned, like I said, they’re just exercising one of their God-given rights.”

On his favorite Thanksgiving meal:

“I’m one plate at a time. It typically does equal two, maybe three. Pretty much anything my wife makes is my favorite. Stephanie is a tremendous cook, she really is. She does a great job with Thanksgiving. I just enjoy the food, to be honest with you. Like I said, usually it equals two plates. I would try for three, but I’m saving room for the pumpkin pie later on.”

On WR Terry McLaurin as a captain:

“He just continues to lead by example. He’s a tremendous young man who understands and gets things and does things the right way. That bodes well for us because he’s a heck of an example for all the young guys. We’ve got a good group of young guys that I like to sit there and point to and say: ‘You can learn from a guy like that.’ That’s what I try to get across to who they are and who they can become. I say: ‘You want to see something? Watch how he does things. Watch how he’s early. Watch how he’s out here doing those extra little somethings.’”

Quite honestly, I've seen the same Terry that I've seen since I've been here. That's the right kind of young man."

On Dallas's success on Thanksgiving:

"I think that's part of it. Think about it, you're home. You're playing relatively early. You still know that when you're done, you still have a chance to go home and have Thanksgiving dinner. Whereas typically, the opponent has to get home and get on an airplane at 1 o'clock in the morning and they're wondering if they'll have any turkey leftover. That's something that I think does play into it, I really do. At the end of the day, both teams still have to play on Thanksgiving. Both teams still have to lineup against one another. At the end of the day, the better team is going to win."

On Smith's deep ball:

"First of all, that's the first time I've heard the nickname 'Captain Checkdown' on him. He does like to throw the deep ball. I just, again, think it's been really the timing of the call. I think [offensive coordinator] Scott [Turner] has done a nice job with the calls. I do think coming to the line, being a veteran guy with some savviness and kind of looking things over and being able to say: 'OK, this is my opportunity. I've got the right matchup over here.' I know last week he threw one to [WR] Isaiah [Wright]. Again, it really is about getting to the line of scrimmage and looking at the matchup, 'Is that what I'm looking for? Is that what I'm looking at?' And then just cutting it loose. That's something that you, as a veteran quarterback, you're always looking for. I think, really—and I'm being serious when I said that—I haven't heard that nickname when you said that. We see it in practice. But, I think a lot of it has to do with his savviness and his understanding of coverages to look at certain elements and say: 'OK, we've got this route combination against that coverage. I've got this matchup versus man.'"

On if there is something he can tweak to start games faster:

"I think the truth of the matter is the biggest thing is we have to make plays when we get opportunities. If you look at the opportunities that we've had in games to either get off the field as a defense or to put the ball in the endzone as an offense, that to me is really the biggest deal more than anything else. I can bring in a sledgehammer and smash pumpkins [laughs]. But to be honest with you guys, it's neither here nor there. A start is a start. Sometimes you finish them off and sometimes you don't. We'll see what happens. We work on things, we work on our scripts, we work on our plays and then we come out in the second half and we call the same play, we call the same defenses and we play better. We'll see what happens come Thursday."

On the redzone defense:

"Well, the only thing I'll say about it more so than anything else is it changes what an offense can do as well. It kind of suits what we're doing once we get into the redzone."