

# WASHINGTON

FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER - LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

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## Head Coach Ron Rivera

### **On how Steelers QB Ben Roethlisberger's passing game has changed:**

“Well, in the past he used to stand back there. Ben used to stand back there and wait for things to open up down the field. He was big and physical. He could hang in the pocket, could buy time for his receivers to get in there and then throw it down there because he's got such a great arm. Now, you see him making quick reads, quick decisions and then getting the ball out. Every now and then, you've got to be on your game because he'll throw one deep. He'll mix it up on you and catch you sleeping. So, you've got to be aware. You've got to play your game. You've got to read your route progression. He's done a great job this year taking advantage of those opportunities when they present themselves.”

### **On the key to defending the red zone:**

“Especially in coverage, your front and your back seven have to be coordinated. You've got to be good in pressure on the quarterback and you have to be connected or tied to your coverage so you're in position and you're set to make a break on the ball. If that happens, you can be good. You can force a lot of bad passes. You can make tackles as guys are catching the ball. You can keep teams out of the endzone.”

### **On looking at other teams as models for culture:**

“I think, really, you can want to model yourself after certain situations and circumstances. That's kind of what you want to do. You want to emulate certain things. This is my tenth season as a head coach, and I'd like to believe that some of the things that I've done in the past and some of the things that I've been apart of with Andy Reid and Dave Wannstedt and Norv Turner and Lovie Smith that there are some good things that I can take from those guys. Then, there are some great examples out there right now. You look at what Pittsburgh's done, what New England's done, New Orleans, Seattle. Why wouldn't you want to emulate those types of places that have had sustained success over a period of time?”

### **On how he emulates culture:**

“Well, you do take things, but you want to make them your own as well. You don't want to sit there and say: ‘Well, this is from Coach Such-and-such and this is why we're doing it.’ No. This is what I've seen and this is how I want to do that.”

### **On S Deshazor Everett and what he looks for in practice when a player returns from injury:**

“When they're practicing, you're looking for—like you asked about Deshazor—you make sure he has his burst, make sure he has his ability to cut and redirect. It's going to be really important, especially for a defensive back, so those are the things that you look at. It's by position. You can get away with offensive linemen or defensive linemen, especially interior guys, if something is not quite as good. If you're out there in the secondary or you're a wide receiver, you've got to have it. That's what you look for and try to study in your guys in terms of whether or not the guy's ready to come back and play.”

### **On the best way to use a bonus day:**

“In my opinion, you’d like to get them out, get them stretched a little bit, get the blood flowing. But to me, it’s really about the mental aspect of the game to make sure they’ve got their assignments down. It’s a good opportunity, in my opinion, to do a full situational review.”

**On Steelers Head Coach Mike Tomlin motivating his team after the Ravens win:**

“Well, again, coaches do things, say things for motivational purposes. Coaches do things, say things to get a point across. They played against their archrival. Again, those types of games are going to happen because that’s the team that they kind of based their team off of. That was last year’s high-water mark. They won their division last year. They had the best record last year. Coaches try to make a point when they do that. Again, as a player, I kind of thought about a lot of the reasons Coach [Mike] Ditka got after us. As a player, you see that. Coaches try to make a point to their guys, coaches try to motivate them, as they go further and further into the season, especially when they have the record they have.”

**On giving up big plays on defense:**

“Well, sometimes stuff happens. Sometimes the referees don’t see everything. Those things happen. Sometimes we get lazy and we let them get over the top. We’ve just got to be disciplined and keep them in front of us. That’s really the thing about it. Again, this is the nature of the game. It’s going to happen. To me, you go out, you work on it, you correct it and you try not to let it happen again.”

**On mentality throughout the season:**

“It’s a shift of flow through the season. You want to practice hard, you want certain tempos during practice, you want to be in pads, you want to go through that early portion early on because now that has to sustain you throughout the year in my opinion. If you practice in pads once a week, you’ll wear your guys down. We were very fortunate the last couple weeks because of the way the schedule has worked out for us that we’ve taken care of our guys. Knock on wood, right now we’re relatively healthy compared to where we are at any point in the season. We feel pretty good about the things we’ve done. Hopefully, they continue to pay dividends for us on the football field.”

**On younger players learning from WR Terry McLaurin:**

“Yes, when you watch that group of young receivers, you do see them see Terry’s example. I think that’s kind of why they practice so hard as a group because they can. When your leader of the group for the most part, your leader by example, continues to practice that way, it elevates everybody. Everybody else practices that way. When I was—way back in the day, here he goes again—Mike Singletary had a habit of practicing at 100 miles an hour. Guys used to call him a tempo violator, but that was just the way it was. It got everybody going. We practiced that way. That helped us to be a better football team because guys feed off the energy of their teammates. That’s what you see guys do with Terry.”

**On the mindset of an undefeated team:**

“From my perspective in the way that we did it and the way we talked about it was we accomplished what we wanted to in terms of getting ourselves into the show, into the playoffs. Now, everything onto this point is really about us going out and doing our jobs. I think that’s the thing. The one thing that we tried to do was we tried to avoid the conversation of it. We tried to keep it one game at a time, one game at a time and then we see what happens. When you start getting ahead and start thinking about the next one, the next one and even the next one after that, now you put yourself in a tough spot. I’ll be honest with you, when we eventually lost I was really disappointed because I would’ve loved to have gone into the Super Bowl undefeated just to see what happens, to see if that changes anything. I really would’ve. I’m not sure where Coach Tomlin is and I don’t want to speak for Mike, I think that’d be pretty cool to be able to do that as a head coach. I would’ve loved that opportunity.”

**On how Head Athletic Trainer Ryan Vermillion has kept the team healthy this year:**

“I think part of it is RV stays on the guys. He tries to assess them and really see and gets to know each guy individually. Some guys you push a certain way, some guys you don’t. Some guys you come to the head coach and say: ‘Hey, we’ve got to take care of this guy.’ We’ll do that. We’ve done that in the past. I truly do trust his opinion. He’s been in this a very long time as a head athletic trainer. We’ve got a good combination of doctors that are working with us well. We’ve got to give credit to them as well. Ryan does a great job, but so do the doctors. We’ve got a great group that handles it. They work together, and we’ve got to continue to keep the focus on taking care of the guys, being proactive and trying to be as preventative as possible.”