



POSTSEASON - WILD CARD ROUND
WASHINGTON FOOTBALL TEAM vs. TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS

Saturday, Jan. 9 | 8:15 p.m. ET
FedExField | Landover, Md.



Washington Head Coach Ron Rivera

On QB Taylor Heinicke's performance:

"It was gutsy. It really was. It's one of those things that—a guy like him who works hard at what he does, he creates an opportunity for himself. We'll see what happens. I was just very proud of what he did, coming out and competing the way he did and helping us get where we are today."

On his message to the team after the game:

"I told them that, for the most part, today, this last stretch that we went through, kind of showed us what we can become and it's up to us. We can learn from this experience that we just had, grow from this experience, and get better. I told the guys: 'We're headed up. We're on our way up.' There are a lot of positives to take from this."

On the decision to rest QB Alex Smith:

"The biggest thing was Alex just felt he couldn't escape. With as aggressive as this defense is that we played, I just felt we didn't want to put him in a bad situation. I hated to do it to Alex, but it was for the better. Alex was unbelievable. Believe me, he's a hell of a man."

On Heinicke's ability to escape tonight:

"Based on what we saw at the end of the Panthers game really told us that Taylor has that ability. We were really fired up about giving him his opportunity today. We felt really good about it. He had a good week. He took majority of the snaps, so it was one of those things—I don't want to call it a fait accompli—but it was pretty certain. He took advantage of it and did a great job for us."

On his emotions:

"All three. I'm disappointed for our guys. They competed their butt off. They did some really good things and gave themselves a chance at the end. The sadness part is things will change. That's just the way it is. As you grow, you've got to evolve and change and adapt. The optimism is these guys showed what they're capable of. They can compete, they can go out there and they can be a really good football team. It's just a matter of how much work we put into it as we get better."

On the defense tonight:

"We had our moments. It's unfortunate. There are a couple things that I wish would've gone our way, but unfortunately, they didn't. We were going up against one of the all-time greats. We had our moments to make plays, and then there were some disappointing things that we've got to get better at."

On if he thought they could have more pressure with a four-man rush:

"Well, we felt we could've. We had some opportunities. [Brady] did a great job. One of the things that they did do was six and seven-man protections. It wasn't just that they said: 'OK, you're going to rush four, we're going to block five.' They didn't put five in around all the time."

On how he would describe this season:

"Wow, that's a tough question. I really haven't had a chance to think about that. It's been everything. It really has. It's been a trying time. It's been hard. It's been difficult. It's been fun. It's been easy. There's been some really good moments. We've grown, we've learned, we've gotten better. I told our guys that

we're going to get better because we're really good, but we can get even better than that. I'm really excited about the potential."

On the decision to go for an onside kick in the first quarter:

"What it was supposed to be was it was supposed to be more of a mortar kick, a chip kick. They had a situation that we felt we could take advantage of. They had a defensive lineman and an offensive lineman situated in their return team, and there was a dead area between them. We were hoping to get a little bit of a chip shot right at the top and have it land in the ground and then hope to have a defensive lineman try to pick the ball up as it was rolling on the ground. We thought with the escape we had, we would be able to make it. Unfortunately, we didn't hit the kick we wanted."

On if he saw future potential for Heinicke:

"Yeah. We did. As I said, the young man has earned an opportunity. That's the best part about this is we're going to create some competition around here. Guys are going to compete, and that's how you're going to get better."

On what he learned from the book *The Splendid and the Vile* that applied to this season:

"It's interesting because, yeah, I take from things. When I read something like that, I feel pretty inspirational. I try to draw from that and try to stay steady and present the right kind of picture to everybody so everybody understands, and everybody sees the same thing and we can all be on the same page. That's why I do it. I think we were able to get on the same page. We were able to do the things we wanted to do to get us to where we wanted to go. We didn't quite get there, but we're most certainly headed in the right way. I believe we're headed up."

On Heinicke's shoulder injury:

"He did something to his shoulder when he lunged for the touchdown. It was pretty sore. They wanted to go and check him really quick and then bring him back out. He was able to come back out. Like I said, it was a courageous performance from him."

On the team rallying around Heinicke:

"There really wasn't much of an announcement or anything like that, you could just tell. They respect guys that go out there and play hard, work hard, and give it their all. When they got to see him compete against Carolina—and, like you said, you talked about it with [DE] Chase Young. Chase just likes guys that go out there and compete hard. It was easy to get behind a guy like that. That's really what happened is guys got behind Taylor. They rallied around him and competed their ass off. They really did. I'm really proud of this group of men. It has not been an easy year. It's been a really trying and taxing year. These guys were very resilient, and they bounced back. It's just unfortunate, and that's where the disappointment comes in."

On if it was a surprise not scoring on the final drive:

"Yes, it was to be honest with you. It really was a surprise because I expected it to come right on down to the two-point conversation that we were going to have to try to take to tie it up. I really was. I was planning on what the two-point conversion was going to be."

On the play-call if they were to go for a two-point conversion:

"I'm not telling you. We might use it someday [laughs]."

On if he had concerns with some officiating calls:

"Well, the unfortunate part is, if I say anything I'll get in trouble. I can't say anything about the fact that we didn't get the rule right when we carried the ball into the endzone. I can't complain about that. I can't complain about some of the missed calls. I can't constantly harp on them. I can't do that either. We'll go from there, and we'll address it with the league."

On next season's schedule:

"That'll be interesting. We'll have meetings tomorrow, and then we'll go from there. Things most certainly are going to change, and we'll have to develop a new normal as we start getting ready for the next season."

On playing four quarterbacks this season to get to where they did:

"Well, I think going through the four quarterbacks gives us a little insight into some things. If you go down the stretch and you look when Alex played and how the ball got distributed and how guys made plays—to me, that just showed what this offense can be. That's what you look for is that in your quarterback, a guy that's going to control things and use all the weapons he has. That's what we saw from Alex. We saw that with [QB] Kyle [Allen] and we saw it with Taylor. It's going to be interesting to see how things unfold as we go forward."

On giving fans hope for next season:

"Well, that's pretty cool. It really is. We've got a great group of young men in that locker room, and we've got a great group of coaches and support people. Those are the guys. Those are the ones that really put it together. I just happen to be the one that manages it. We've got some really special guys. This group, I think if we can grow and learn together and add on a couple more pieces, I think we have a shot next year. It'll be fun to watch. I'm just glad that we were able to give the DMV something to cheer about. I promise you one thing, like I said, we'll show up and we'll play hard."

QB Taylor Heinicke

On his shoulder injury:

"Yeah, so I dove in the endzone that pylon. I reached out my arm and when I hit the ground, I felt a little click or pop and I didn't feel good after that. The next series I got hit and hit the ground a couple of times and decided we should go in and look at it and it was AC joint separation. I came back out there and wanted to gut it out. We put everything out there on the line but just came up a little short."

On his emotions during the week and what he proved:

"A lot of people have asked me what it feels like going up against the GOAT [Greatest Of All Time], Tom Brady, and I didn't really think about that this week. I just focused on doing my job, getting completions and letting those guys do their thing. But looking back at the game in the next couple of days, it's going to be some, I'll be really proud about. Everything that has happened in the past month and a half, and to go out there and do that, I'm proud of myself and I'm happy that coaches believed in me and gave me the opportunity so again you know hopefully I can do it again next year. Hopefully, I deserve to be in this league a little longer. Again, I've been on the other side, not playing, being in the real world and it's not fun. It's not as fun as this. So, again, I want to be in the NFL, I want to keep playing ball. It's a dream of mine and keep working towards it."

On the last drive of the game:

"It was a hard-fought game. We were battling back all game and again we just came up a little short. That sack on third down was big, I should've just let it go and have a manageable fourth down but it's tough to get a fourth down and what 17 or 20. I tried to give Logan [Thomas] a shot but you know how those fourth and long's go at the end of the game."

On Chase Young's support meme:

"Was that the Chase Young Heinicke thing? Yeah, I kind of heard that in the background that that was pretty funny. But again, you know Chase is a great guy. He's always there, right down the sideline when offense is

on the field. I can't say enough good things about Chase. Being a rookie, taking the reins like he has, being a leader. He's going to be a real problem in the NFL for a long time.”

On when he plans to take his finals from his semester:

“Well, hopefully these professors will email me and say, “You passed, you're good,” but I'm pretty sure that's not going to happen. A couple weeks from now I'm sure I'll take them and hopefully I can pass them.”

On how important mobility is when he plays:

“Yeah, in the off-season and during this whole season when I wasn't playing, I was just speed training and throwing. I was preparing like I was going to play. So that's a big part of my game. I've tried to emulate my game after a little Drew Brees and Russell Wilson. Those guys I feel like that's kind of my type of game. So, if something breaks down and you have to run something I could do. I think it's a good tool to have.”

On when he found out he'd be starting:

“Ron Rivera told me yesterday I'd be starting, so about 24 hours.”

On preparation for tonight's game:

“I was preparing like I was starting on all week. I thought in my mind I was going to start all week. So, again, when you prepare like you're going to start. That makes it that much easier on Saturday or Sunday. And again, the quarterback room does a great job of that.”

On touchdown run:

“Yeah. We had a play where the halfback comes out of the backfield in the flat, trying to hit them now and they covered him well, then we had a drag come to replace and they covered him well. And hopefully we got Logan on a dig right behind him, but they covered him, so I tried to make a play and the defensive line was actually doing a great job of containing me in there. I just slipped and found a hole and just took off. And, again, when I saw that pile on, I just wanted to get that touchdown.”

On Patrick Mahomes tweet:

“Yeah, you know, Mahomes is a great player obviously and probably one of the best in the game right now, if not the best. We're in the same agency. So, I might have to send him a couple of texts, maybe learn a couple things from him but again that's pretty cool, for one of the best, if not the best to be tweeting about me.”

On phone message notifications after the game:

“I haven't even checked it yet. Really probably don't plan on it until tomorrow. It's a late night. I'm hurting right now. I'm just going to go home and sleep. I'm sure I got a lot.”

On Alex Smith giving advice for tonight's game:

“He's been helping me all week, and he's actually been helping me since the moment I got here. And that just speaks volumes about Alex you know everything that he's been through and just the person he is, the teammate he is. I can't say enough good things about him, so you know he's a big part of this.”

On managing nerves during game time:

“I just wanted to go out there and complete the ball and let those guys do it. I go back to college and what my college coaches used to tell me they just told me to complete the ball and get first downs and when you keep getting first downs. Next you know you're getting points. So that was my biggest thing. Get the right read, get the ball to those guys and let them do the work. We just came a little short today.”

CB Kendall Fuller

On the defensive struggles:

“We definitely have to give them credit. They definitely made some plays and, you know, we definitely had some series where we just got to lock in and just do the little things correct. When you start to get into playoff football, one play can make the difference and you got to lock in every snap. And like I said, we give them credit they made more plays to win than we did.”

On if the atmosphere and culture of this team reminds him at all of Kansas City last year:

“In KC the years I was there was a culture that was kind of already set, already there, and I think we did a good job here to building that culture and, you know, we just got to learn from this and build on it. I remember my first year in KC we lost in the AFC Championship and we used that to give us motivation to learn from it, to help us win a Super Bowl and that's the same process, same progress that we have got to do here.”

On what he saw from Tampa Bay QB Tom Brady:

“I mean he just made the throws that he needed to make. He did the little things right, gave his guys opportunities. Like I said, in playoff football all it is one play that can win or lose the game and they just did a good job, came out, executed and made more plays than we did.”

On what his thoughts were when watching QB Taylor Heinicke run the offense:

“Just his grit. His willingness to fight, his willingness to compete. And, you know, at the end of the day he gave us a chance to win it. That's all we can ask from him. It definitely motivated the whole team.”

On if he feels like this team is on the rise:

“I mean just look at our coach. Look at the way we fought all year and the way we competed all year. We are definitely heading in the right direction, heading in the right trend. We are just going to come in in the offseason and work hard, keep on following coach Rivera, keep on buying into the system and the culture and just keep on going out there and competing and trying to win ballgames.”

T Morgan Moses

On QB Taylor Heinicke's performance:

“I think, man, the guy's an awesome football player, number one. I've had the chance to watch him in his ODU days, obviously playing in Virginia. I think the kid threw for like 751 yards one game. I knew he had it in him. Obviously, when he came in against Carolina and came in and drove the ball down the field, it's something that you just can't teach. He has that 'it' factor. You can't teach that.”

On if he knew Heinicke had this potential back in college:

“I mean, obviously, you don't know how it'll pan out in the NFL. But as soon as we signed him, [offensive coordinator] Coach [Scott] Turner came up to us and said: 'Hey, we had this guy in Carolina for a couple years. He filled in for [former Panthers QB] Cam [Newton] in the playoff run when he was hurt.' Me knowing him and just watching him play football at ODU and seeing him throw the ball, obviously he has a talented arm. I didn't know he was that fast. He came in and played a hell of a game. You couldn't ask for a guy to come in here and play any better.”

On what he saw on Heinicke's rushing touchdown:

“His ability to stay in the pocket. When things unfolded, I think he ran into that corner and he had his back turned to, I think it was [WR] Terry [McLaurin]. He took the opportunity. Obviously, it's the playoffs, so the guy took a dive. He got a little banged up from it, but that's what you want from our quarterback. Every quarterback that we've had—[QB] Alex [Smith], obviously he came back and put his body on the line. You couldn't ask for any more than that as a teammate and as a player.”

On the team rallying around Heinicke:

“It’s just the way he carries himself in the facility and in the building. He’s a true pro. I can’t tell you why he was on the street before we picked him up because obviously you see him out there playing today, he has every quality of a football player that you want. I’m just glad we got him. He did a great job. There are no words to explain the performance that he had today. He stepped up in there on a big-time stage. I commend him for that.”

On the direction of the franchise:

“I think the most important thing is I appreciate every guy in this room that we have. Nobody gave us the opportunity or the chance to be here in this moment. We’ve been through a lot as a team with [Head] Coach [Ron] Rivera, him battling cancer and the other coaches stepping up and the players stepping up and us leaning on each other. It’s probably been one of my most fun years playing football with these guys because it’s been all football between us. I’m just at a loss for words, man. I appreciate these guys. I think the future is bright. We’ve got a lot of great players. I wish we could’ve gotten it done today. We fell a little short. The future is bright. I feel great about the players that we have, and I feel great about the building that we’ll be doing in this offseason, bringing in new players in the draft and those things. I look forward to it. I think you’ve seen us gel together in the second half of this season. A lot of guys put it on the line. A lot of guys put it on the line, man. As a veteran player who’s been here for seven years and have kind of been here and seen everything, I appreciate the hell out of that from the younger guys all the way up to the veteran guys. It just means a lot. I’m just happy to be a part of this team and be a part of this culture. I look forward to getting back to work in the offseason.”

WR Terry McLaurin

On QB Taylor Heinicke’s performance:

“When he first got here about a month or so ago, I didn’t really know too much about him. I knew he played in the system and I knew he was a guy who had some potential. The first time I even caught a pass from him was last week, but he gained my respect. I have nothing but respect for number four. The way he came in and handled his business on a moment’s notice when we found out that Alex wasn’t going to be able to go, he was just prepared for his moment. That’s what this league is about, being prepared for your moment. He was going through some things out there, got banged up a little bit, but you weren’t gonna take him out of that game. I take number four on my team any day of the week, twice on Sunday, so he has my respect. I hope we’re teammates in the future and I’m just proud of the way he gave us a chance to compete today.”

On what he saw from Heinicke on the field:

“That dude plays with no fear, and he’s going to give his playmakers a chance to make plays. He’s going to extend plays, run and take hits. He’s gonna do everything you asked for a quarterback to do in this league. For a guy who hadn’t, to my knowledge, played a lot of football up until this point necessarily, starting-wise, I think he played pretty well. He gave us a chance to make plays down the field, some we made, some we didn’t. He made plays with his legs. He executed the offense at a very high level. And like I said to do that, to fill Alex’s shoes, in a big moment in the playoffs, his first start is in the playoffs. I have nothing but respect for that guy.”

On what the conversation was like after the game with Heinicke before he left the field:

“I just told him I appreciated him for laying it out on the field for us today. He’s a baller and he has a heart of a lion. I told him that I appreciate him and I’d take him on my team any day of the week. I feel like he respected that. The thing about him, he’s a man of few words, but his actions speak volumes. He was one of our leaders today out there on the field.”

On if it has sunk in that the season is over:

“Everything’s still kind of fresh right now. It’s different in the NFL, you come back and you have a different team than you had the previous year. I’m not really trying to focus on what’s next for us. We have a meeting

in the morning. I'm just trying to enjoy the guys that we have in this locker room because we have a special group considering all that we've been through on and off the field. There's good, bad, highs and lows. We fought man and, by no means are we happy with the result today because we're not in it for participation trophies and just getting here. I feel like we're making the right step in the right direction, coming back from what we did last year. Coach Rivera has us on a really good path right now and hopefully everybody takes this moment to look ourselves in the mirror and we could come back stronger for next year.”

On what he did to get through these past few weeks:

“A lot of treatment. A lot of mental toughness and prayers. I'm not a guy who's used to being hurt but I have a great support system with my family, my girlfriend, my friends, my teammates. It's not necessarily easy, but everybody goes through this, it's a part of the game. Once I got out of my mindset of, ‘Why is this happening to me? Why me?’ Just taking things day-by-day and continuing to pray and lean into my faith, things started to turn around for me. Mentally, first of all and then physically I started making turns and just looking my teammates in the face and knowing that this could be the end for us. I couldn't end the season not playing. I played through some pain but that's part of it. I would do it twice over again.”

On if this year surprised him with what the team accomplished:

“Coming into this season we didn't know what to expect. First of all, you have the COVID pandemic that's impacted everyone. Then we had a new coaching staff coming in. We got a lot of new players. We've had some switch-ups in a lot of positions and the one thing I respect about us is every single game we fought to the end. Did we play perfect? No. Did we start fast and finish strong? No. But, I felt like we never gave up and we got a lot of dogs in that locker room who are hungry to turn this organization around and head in the right direction where it belongs. That's not going to happen overnight. We have to continue to work and grind every single day. As a young leader like myself, I'm just going to continue to lean on the older guys and look myself in the mirror to see what I could do better next year to be a better player and leader.”

DT Daron Payne

On the defensive line getting pressure on QB Tom Brady:

“We were just rushing hard with relentless effort on every play.”

On if the Buccaneers were changing things up throughout the game which contributed to the defense being consistent:

“Tom Brady is a good player. They have good players on their team. We tried to make plays when we did. Wish we could have made more.”

On what this year meant:

“I was really excited by the way the team competed. We didn't just lay down at the beginning of the season when things were going bad. We just kept fighting. I think there is a lot to build on going into the offseason. I'm really excited to see what we're gonna bring to the table next year.”

On if he takes a lot of pride tallying two sacking on Tom Brady or if the loss will offset his individual moment:

“If we would have made it out with a win, I definitely would have been happier than I am now, but I'll take it. You live and you learn. I wish we could have made a couple more plays and got off the field a couple of more times on third down and we would have been dancing around in the locker room afterward.”

On what it's like being a teammate with DE Ryan Kerrigan:

“He's is a guy that you can just sit back and watch and emulate. Everything he does is the right way to do things and you can learn so much from him if you just sit back and watch him. I appreciate him. I love him to death and I'm just happy that I got a chance to play with him.”

On QB Taylor Heinicke's performance

“Heinicke went out there and did what he had to do. Made some plays and moved the ball down the field. I'm proud of him for how he came in and competed, so I thank him for that.”