

**Washington Head Coach Ron Rivera
Postgame Quotes – December 13, 2020
San Francisco 49ers vs. Washington Football Team**

Do you have any updates on QB Alex Smith?

“Yes, what happened was Alex developed some tightness and muscle soreness as he was pushing off that right leg. As we ended the half, they took him in to get x-rays. The x-rays were fine. There was no issue there, but he had the soreness and it was tight. So we decided not to have him go back out there in the second half. We had them there in case of emergency, he stayed on the sideline, stayed loose and tried to loosen it up, but it just stayed tight. He couldn't get it loose. In an abundance of caution, we went with [QB] Dwayne [Haskins Jr.] in the second half.”

What can you say about your defense and the performance they had in this game today?

“It was pretty exciting. They did a lot of good things. They really stepped up and helped out. I know there's some issues that [Defensive Coordinator] Jack [Del Rio] is not happy with, but Jack's expecting an awful lot from those guys as we all are and those guys rose to the occasion.”

Over the last few weeks you've talked about how DE Chase Young was staying patient when he was being double-teamed and triple teamed when he was held sackless. For him to have the performance he had after you've told him to not get frustrated and to wait for that moment. What did you say to him after the game after this performance and what his reaction in the locker room?

“He's fired up, He really is. I haven't had a chance to talk to him. I've told you guys, he's one of the young guys that brings a lot of energy and it's an amazing thing because he's infectious with his teammates. I think that's the kind of thing that we need from these young guys because it really carries a lot of energy into the group and that's exciting. He's been great. I'm just real happy for him, because again, he went through a lot of things in terms of just trying to get opportunities when he's been doubled and tripled a lot in the past, but he just stayed patient, kept doing his job and it came up big for us today.”

Given the situation, was that the performance you would would've wanted from Dwayne at that time, when he was coming in and how it was going, was that what you were kind of hoping for from him?

“Yeah. I mean, again, he's showing growth and that's the thing we've got to look for and we'll continue to work it and we'll see what happens. We'll see how Alex is as this week progresses and we will prepare accordingly.”

I know Jack always wants to get better, but what do you think the reason is the defense has played maybe a little bit better in the last month or so? Is that the linebackers decisiveness, the defensive line, what do you attribute that to?

“I attribute it to a little bit of everything. First and foremost, not having OTAs and mini-camp, I think played into the slow development and growth that we had as a team. So what's happening is I think you're seeing everything come together and that's what we've been working towards at this time of year is to have things in the right place and we're starting to see it.”

You've talked about players having kind of that “aha” moment with learning the new scheme and everything, did chase young, even as a first round pick and a very effective passer early, did he kind of have that at some point in the season too?

“He's definitely starting to have that. You're starting to see him really get more and more comfortable in our share and just how important it is to do things within the framework of the defense. Things that

these guys do impact the players next to them and that's one of the big things they have to understand as they're growing and developing in this defense.”

How did the offensive game plan change when Dwayne came in?

“It didn't. It's one of those things that we moved the ball, got it down into position. We had an opportunity to make a couple of things happen and unfortunately we didn't, but you've got to give them credit too. They came out and got after us a couple of times and thank goodness the defense stepped up. I thought one of the really big things was when we were down the goal line. We got the ball moved out, almost got the first down, but at least it allowed us to punt the ball and put them in a tough position.”

If there had been an emergency situation, would Alex have been able to come back in?

“Alex would have been able to come back in if it had been an emergency situation, but again it was with an abundance of caution, because he strained the calf basically. Again, the positives are that he took X-rays and there wasn't an issue.”

What growth did you see from Dwayne?

“The first couple throws you saw were a lot of quick decisions, good decisions, with some poise back. He was just operating the offense.”

Chase obviously gets a lot of credit as he well deserves, but S Kamren Curl had the pick six, but he's been big for you guys all year. How much progress has he made from Week One to right now?

“You see the progress and the growth. I mean, the young man is a very physical player, he's a box safety, he shows some range. He's a guy that's learning and understanding and you see him putting himself in the right position. That that's where you see young guys when they're where they need to be, when there's opportunities. That's been great as far as Kam Curl has been concerned, where Chase Young has been concerned. These guys, these young players, [LB] Cole Holcomb, that you see that from, that's big and that's what we're looking for in terms of development.”

When you drafted Chase Young, you said something along the lines of, for the number two pick you need a guy that makes those big plays. Was today the perfect example of that?

“That is a great example of it. Guys that are taken as early as Chase was has to be a guy that can impact a game and help the guys around him be better, play better and we've got a group of those guys on that defensive line. They all help each other be better, play better. When the outside rush has coming and bending that corner, that quarterback has got to step up and he's stepping up into the interior of our rush. If the rush is pushing, the quarterback gets outside, with that outside speed we have, we should be able to run that quarterback down and create some issues and you're seeing that because of that.”

You've talked all year about wanting the conversation about your team to look forward, that hasn't always been possible in a week like this with the people on their team, but what does a win like this do for you? What does this stretch of games do for you in terms of moving this conversation going forward with this team?

“Well that's what we're trying to do. We're trying to talk about where we're headed, not where we've been. I think that's one of the big things that I'm hoping to get across as we go forward as a football team. We're going to be a different team. We're going to play differently and we're going to try and create a culture, a sustainable winning culture that we can all be feel good about and be proud of. With the way these guys are playing and with their development, I hope that's the message that's getting across to the fans and that you guys can put out there to help us.”

I know all season long, you've been preaching, we only control what we can control, but the reality is now three games left in the season you control your own destiny. You went out, you're going to make the playoffs. What's your message to the team after the game knowing now that you truly control your own destiny?

"That's it more so than anything else. It's about what we do and how we do it. I think that's the most important thing. We're relevant, we're in the conversation, people are talking about us and we have to maintain and be humble. Like I told them about last week's victory and now this week's victory, this thing will carry us to the game, but it won't mean anything once we play the game. So we've just got to enjoy it and then get ourselves prepared for the next game that we play. We've got a Seattle team coming that's a good football team."

When the defense has talent and then the talent has good results, when does that kind of lightning strike where it becomes a dominant unit? where it starts to believe it can dominate opposition?

"Once they gain confidence then they play with that confidence and they make things happen. That's important and that's the thing that we're starting to see. There's a little bit of swagger and we've got to be careful because we made a couple of mistakes out there that were costly. There were a couple of penalties and we've got to be a little bit better with our discipline. We also need to be more disciplined with our rush lanes as well. There were a couple of times the quarterback got outside and hurt us. That's on us. We've got to play disciplined football."