

WASHINGTON

FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER – LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

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Head Coach Ron Rivera

On simulating game speed in practice:

“That’s the biggest thing we have to do. We’ve got to get them to understand that you have to practice with this kind of tempo. The hitting will come naturally, and that’s kind of what happened. A lot of those hits today were just natural hits. Guys were in good football positions and the collisions are unavoidable. Really at that point, you want to make sure that they’re forming up, tackling properly, they’re keeping their heads up, they’re in good square positions. You want the runners to make sure they’re protecting the ball. We’ve got to do a better job. We put a couple on the ground today, which we can’t. But for the most part, it’s the kind of physicality we’re hoping to get. It’s going to be hard to simulate the real physicality of the game until you start playing.”

On hitting more in practice:

“We’re kind of phasing into a little bit more. Like I said, it’s happening organically. When these guys practice fast, play hard, it’s going to happen. Again, that’s what we want to see. We want these guys to understand once they get on the field, it all should be natural. It all should come to them and be a part of what they’ve done because they’ve practiced fast and they’ve practiced hard.”

On DE Chase Young participating in goal-line drills:

“We want to put him in a situation where he can start working himself back into it. We didn’t want to overload him. We didn’t put him in a lot of drills. We kind of picked and chose the ones we thought he would be able to protect himself in without trying to protect himself. You’d hate to have him in there when you’re doing some sort of full-team movement out there in the middle of the field where he’s trying to open up 100 percent. You’ve just got to be smart with it and let him work himself gradually back and get a feel for it again.”

On how Thursday’s stadium practice will differ:

“Just the fact that we’ll be at the stadium, that’s really it. We’ve got to continue to do our situations, continue to do our base fundamentals. Really, it’s about us as players and coaches getting a feel for being in that atmosphere because, again, we won’t play any preseason games there. So, we’ll have the opportunity to get a couple good workdays in leading up to it, which we have. We’ll have a shell practice tomorrow, a day off and then we’ll go back into shells when we’re out at the stadium and really just try to get comfortable being at our home field.”

On introducing President Jason Wright to the team:

“Well you know, I think [the hire] was very important, first of all for the organization. It was very important. Mr. [Owner Daniel] Snyder making that hire of Jason for a lot of reasons. One of the things that was a real big plus—and Jason let the guys know—Jason played. That’s very important for him to understand he knows, he gets it. He’s going to be very aware of how important it is to lead the organization, the business side, so that we work together football and business. He got that message across to the players. But he also got that message across: ‘Hey guys, I get it. My door’s open. If any of you guys have any questions about anything, about transitioning.’ He has a great message to share with these guys. I think our players appreciated knowing that he’s open to all that.”

On S Troy Apke and LB Kevin Pierre-Louis:

“We’re going to continue to rotate those guys in and out. We think both those guys are young guys that haven’t played a lot of football that just need opportunities out on the field. Troy’s really stepping into the forefront. He’s handling his situation very well and he’s showing some growth. That’s probably the most important thing is that he shows growth. With Kevin Pierre, he’s working in with the ones in the nickel situations, he’s working with the ones in the base. So, he’s just kind of going through and we’re trying to see really where everybody fits. They’re two young guys, guys that haven’t played a lot of football, that are trying to make a dent in what we do. They both are catching our attention.”

On if he’s seen separation in the tight ends group:

“You see certain things, certain elements. We know [TE] Logan [Thomas] is showing to be a really good target, especially in the red zone. You see him kind of developing the rapport you’d love with [QB] Dwayne [Haskins]. I think Dwayne’s hit him something like five times in the red zone and in the end zone in the last three days. So, you know they’re building that kind of rapport, which is great. [TE] Marcus Baugh is probably the most athletic out of all of them. Probably the most stout is TE Jeremy Sprinkle. These are guys that we’ve got to find out what combination of tight ends we’re going to keep and how we’re going to use those guys.”

On WR Antonio Gandy-Golden learning to separate:

“First of all, he’s got to learn what he’s supposed to do. He’s still a young guy, he’s still making mistakes out there. First, you’ve got to understand where to get lined up, understand where the motion and movement is for him to do those things and how to do his routes. How to tempo himself, how to get down field and how to put himself in position. Then how to use that good size that he has. He’s a big-bodied receiver. Sometimes these young guys come in and they want to play like a small receiver. They’re not and he’s not. He’s a big, physical player who’s got to use his strength. He’ll get a feel for that, it’s just a matter of time. He’s just got to keep practicing hard. He’s got to keep challenging our defensive backs. I like our DBs. I like our corners. I think these guys are really coming along very well for us.”

On why he likes about having big receivers:

“Because they block. We want big, physical guys that are willing to go inside and make the tough blocks. Sometimes it’s not necessarily the blocking up front that pops the big run as much as it is having a receiver come down inside and either getting in the way of the linebacker or taking the safety out of the play. That’s what’s attractive about big receivers. Secondly, is their good, friendly targets for quarterbacks. A nice big, long set of arms out there gives a quarterback a good catch radius to throw the ball at.”

On if any position groups are more difficult to assess in camp:

“Well, special teams that’s for doggone sure, I’ll tell you that much. The linebacker position. It’s always tough because a guy might get there, but is he getting there in position to make the tackle? That’s one of the things, you know—can he get there and put an arm out? I’ll tell you, [RB] Adrian Peterson’s going through some arms. He’s not going to get arm tackled. Or a guy might get there, but is he under control? Because if not, [RB J.D.] McKissic’s going to shave him. That’s hard to judge because you don’t have that ability to tackle. And then again, tight ends. Those guys are hard to evaluate because they have to do the dirty work as well. They have to come down inside and block the big guys. They’ve got to be able to get downfield. When you can’t go at that real speed, it’s hard to see exactly what they’re capable of.”

On if Haskins’s decision making matched his accuracy today:

“Yes, very much so. The two-minute drive was an excellent precursor to what we talk about. He took it, he took it and then all of a sudden you saw the defense getting impatient, and then all of a sudden he hit a couple of deeper balls. Now, all of a sudden he’s got the option of throwing the ball short underneath or throwing it right through the middle of the defense. He did a nice job. He preserved our time outs, so he was able to move us down the field. And then when he got the man-to-man press coverage that he was looking for, he was able to

throw the deep ball. So, when you get in those type of situations, it really isn't about—again like I said yesterday—making the big plays, it's about making the right ones. He made a bunch of the right plays today.”

On the productivity of this altered offseason:

“The only thing I think you're really going to miss are the preseason games. I'll say this, too, the way we went through the ramped-up period and the way we are now in pads, I'm very comfortable with that. I really am because those first couple weeks of ramp-up was an opportunity to go back and do what you normally do in OTAs. That's the installation and the getting to know your guys. And then as we got into the next phases of ramp-up, then we got to see some of the competition, some of the guys competing against one another, and now we're in the padded phase where we're hitting and doing those things. If there was a way to play one or two preseason games, I'd be all for it right now just because we've progressed really nicely. The soft issue injuries have been down because of it I think. Who knows, maybe we're onto something where some things could change. But I really thought we've done a nice job of taking advantage. I stress to our players and coaches: 'Let's take a couple weeks as if we're in OTAs. We're working to a phase up. We're working to a phase up until we get into pads. I thought our guys handled it well. I tried to keep that approach of it's an opportunity to learn, learn, learn, learn, learn. I thought the guys were on it. I am pleased with where we are. We've got a long way to go, we really do. It's a process, and that's what I'm stressing to the guys that we're in the middle of this process of development, the process of learning and growing. As we continue to take another step each day, each week, hopefully we can put ourselves in position to be ready to play football when we start in September.”

On building culture this offseason:

“Just the hard part was getting to see these guys in person because I think, when you see these guys in person, you get certain reactions. You see certain reactions. On Zoom, I've got like 100 guys lined up around me. I can't see everybody's face when I say something. So, to be up in front of the guys in person and say something, you see guys react. You see who is starting to buy in and get it and understand, and then you can help those that don't, those guys that aren't looking at you like 'OK I get it. I get it.' Now you see your guy give you a sort of quizzical look and you can pull a guy aside and say, 'Hey think about this, think about this.' Some of the guys right now, they're struggling to get past what they've been through the last couple years and buy into what we're trying to teach and preach now. When you see that on a guy's face, you can pull him aside and ask 'What puzzles you? What bothers you? Think about it this way. Think about this.' I think it's real important to get hands-on with these guys. That's the one thing I miss not having OTAs and minicamp.”

On his concerns over the false positives across the league:

“Well, at the end of the day if that's what happens it could potentially happen during the regular season so we've got to be able to adjust and adapt. That's the truth of the matter, is that if something happens, hey guys we've got to go by the protocols and the rules so let's just keep going with who's out there even to the point where one of our coaches isn't out there. So, we just have to adapt and be prepared for it. Hopefully we don't have those, but if they do, we have to be ready for them.”

On if he envisioned Haskins playing with the ones before camp:

“No, this is kind of how it goes. At the end of the day, QB Kyle [Allen]'s had a lot of reps in this. So we've got to give Dwayne the opportunity to get as many reps as we can. Again, we've got two and a half weeks to go, so we're still in the middle of all this.”

On turnovers in practice bother him or if they are due to players adjusting:

“I think I look at it both ways, but at the end of the day the emphasis on the offensive side of the ball is to protect the ball at all costs. The emphasis on the defensive side is to take the ball away. I show these guys a very interesting stat that when where I came from, from 2013 to 2017, when we won the takeaway battle we won 92 percent of the time. The stat here for this team when they won the takeaway battle was only 68 percent of the

time. So, there's a huge disparity in my opinion in your attitude and the way you look at things. So, I want to emphasize to our guys that that to me is very important and very valuable. So, we have to protect the football. We've got to take care of the football, and on the inverse, we've got to get the football. We've got to take it away. I just believe very strongly in that. I'm very fortunate in that some of the coaches I've been with has stressed that from when I spent my time with Andy Reid, my time with Lovie Smith. Those guys really emphasized it and I've kind of carried that with me in my coaching career, how important it is to take the ball away."

On if the takeaway stat is indicative of mentality:

"Yes. I think it's very indicative of mentality. One of the mentalities we talked about as a football team, too, was I mentioned that stretch from 2013 to 2017 when I was somewhere else. We want 72 percent of the time when we rush for 100 yards on offense. So, again, being physical, being a downhill football team doesn't just apply to being a defensive unit. It also applies to being an offensive unit. We've got to be physical. We've got to play downhill. We've got to get after our opponents."