

WASHINGTON

FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER – LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

September 2, 2020

Head Coach Ron Rivera

On the quarterbacks:

“I went ahead and announced that [QB] Dwayne Haskins Jr. will be our starter day one. We’re going to go forward with that.”

On the decision to name Haskins Jr. the starter:

“Just so you guys don’t ask that question anymore. You know exactly who our starter is, but more importantly our players know who our starter is. This has been a little bit different training camp than I had anticipated. We got into a situation where we weren’t playing and preseason games and it was going to be hard to do a really true competition in terms of the way I would’ve liked to see it unfold where you start one guy one week, you start another guy the next week. Without having that ability or that opportunity, I kind of made the decision to go ahead and go. We wanted to have Dwayne get as many reps with the ones going forward, and that’s what we did. So, we stuck to that. I’m sorry you guys weren’t privy to that information, but that was just something that I felt was going to be best for that football team about three weeks ago. Again, Dwayne’s lived up to everything he and I talked about back in the middle of January. He really has. I’ve been very pleased with his effort and his attitude and the way he approached everything.”

On why President Jason Wright is an asset to Washington:

“Just the fact that he’s an impressive young man. If you look at his history and who he is—you know a guy that went to Northwestern, walked on and a free agent in the NFL. That type of desire, that type of drive to play as long as he did and then go back and get his MBA, to me that just speaks of an impressive person. And then, when you sit down and talk to him, he’s equally as impressive. To me, it’s an amazing thing that here’s a guy that went to Northwestern, played in the league as long as he did, got himself into the league just from pure effort and desire and then goes and gets his MBA—I think that’s a great story. I think that’s a great thing for our franchise because as far as our players are concerned, here’s a guy that can show them: ‘Hey, this is doable. You don’t just have to be a football player for X amount of years and then you’re done. You can prepare yourself for later in life.’ That’s what Jason’s done and that’s why I think he’s perfect for us. He’s an excellent example for our players.”

On how Wright has handled his position so far:

“I think he’s handled it very well, I really do. One of the things that he’s done is he’s been supportive of me in talking to the players about the situations and circumstances a week ago and talking about the [Jacob Blake] shooting. He was right there to support me, and then he asked me to be in on his call when he was talking to the rest of the organization. So, I was there to support him. You just see this that he gets it, he understands it. He knows that when it comes to football, he’s there for coach and when it comes to the business side, coach is there for him. That’s what we’re trying to get across to all of our employees, all of our players and to the people that support us. This is a team effort. We’re going to work together and try to make sure we get things done right.”

On the decision to acquire T David Sharpe:

“He’s a very athletic guy that was available. He’s a guy that’s played in this league, started in this league. Things didn’t work out for him with the Raiders. So for us, he’s a guy that we’ve always kept an eye on. We know what his talent is, we know what his abilities are. This gives us a guy who comes in and can add some pretty good depth for us. He can play multiple positions. Who knows, maybe when he gets comfortable in what we do and gets to work with [offensive line coach John] Matsko and [assistant offensive line coach Travelle] Wharton, this may be a guy that may push some of the other position guys.”

On transitioning into regular season practices:

“Well, what we did today was we really kind of morphed into our regular season routine. We wanted to give our guys a feel for it before we start next week for real. Today, we were still kind of doing a lot of the training camp drills, but what we really wanted to do was show them how we mapped it out—everything from the meeting time to the installation period to practice. Then what will happen is they’re going to have lunch—well, first they started with breakfast. We had snacks available for them going out that they could take with them for the installation period and then practiced. Now we’ll have a nice, healthy lunch for these guys. They’ll finish up with their review meetings from practice today and then they’ll be done. They’ll be done around 5-5:30. Just so they get a feel and a sense for what it’s going to be like. We didn’t just want to start the week out cold and them not have an idea. We wanted them to have a feel for what they’re going to do.”

On where Haskins Jr. has improved in training camp:

“I think handling himself. There’s a certain aspect of being the face of the franchise in terms of being the starting quarterback that you have to deal with, kind of like being the head coach. There are some things that you just don’t deal with normally. But, because of who you are, you have to deal with those things. That’s how it is for Dwayne. There are certain things he has to do. He has to carry himself a certain way, he has to deal with on-the-field issues the same way he deals with off-the-field issues. I thought he’s done a great job. I think part of it, too, is developing who he is not just physically but mentally. I thought he’s done a nice job handling that situation as well. I’ve watched him improve his decision making. He’s got the skillset. He’s got a quick arm. He’s got quickness as a quarterback in terms of decision making and getting himself into that position to throw the ball and deliver a good ball. That’s the things you look for in terms of development of young guys. Some of the stuff I learned when I was in Carolina, watching [former Carolina offensive coordinators] Rob Chudzinski and Mike Shula work with Cam Newton, I kind of was trying to take those lessons I learned from both of those guys and watch how we do things with Dwayne. I saw that with [offensive coordinator] Scott [Turner] and [quarterbacks coach] Ken [Zampese]. I thought those two guys did a nice job bringing him along, bringing [QB] Kyle [Allen] along. Again, that’s what you want to see. You want to see the development of your young guys.”

On the balance between seeing development and doing things right:

“Well, I think that’s all part of it. You can’t stop them from making mistakes because if you do, you’ll never see any growth. They can’t learn from anything. So, the thing that you don’t want though is for them to repeat those mistakes. To me, that’s when you see the real growth is when you hear people say: ‘Wow, he doesn’t make the same mistake twice. He learns from his mistakes.’ Those are the important things that we look for as coaches. We’ll talk about it constantly: ‘We ran this play X amount of times, and each time we ran it, this is what happened.’ Well again, you can’t do that. You can’t sit there and have it almost predictable that this is going to happen. You’ve got to be able to say, ‘Man, he’s learned that. When that safety does that he’s going to work this side of the route. Or you know, when the safety did this, the first time he did that but the second time, he understood he had to go there.’ So, those are the things that start indicating growth and development.”

On if he has had development conversations more this offseason:

“Yeah, I think there is some of that as we discuss the players. We as coaches, we’ve got a lot of difficult decisions. We’ve got to look at how, one, does the player fit what we’re going to do? Is he going to be a guy that can go out and play within our scheme and help us win? Is he a guy that we want to develop for the future? If so, what do we have to do to make sure he’s being developed? We’ve got a lot of things to talk about and discuss in the next few days as coaches and as scouts and personnel people.”

On what Haskins Jr. specifically showed during camp:

“He began to speed up. Things happen fast, and when you try to get guys to practice fast, play fast so that everybody’s getting a fast, fast look, well you’ve started to see him early on catch onto things. While things were happening fast, he was just a tick behind and all of a sudden he was even with everything. Now all of a sudden he’s ahead of everything. Those are the things that you’re looking for when you’re watching guys. Is he speeding up? Is he picking up the nuances of what the defense is showing? Is he wrapped into them in a timely fashion or ahead of it to where he’s almost anticipating it?”

On the importance of having LB Thomas Davis Sr. as a leader:

“It’s very important. But you also have a guy that’s had success so the guys can say, ‘Wow, this guy is pretty amazing.’ One of the guys that we had when I was in Carolina that had a specific role was we had [S] Roman Harper the year we went to the Super Bowl in 2015. The dude was phenomenal the way he did things. He knew his role. One day he played 30 plays and another game he played five plays, but he knew his role and he was there. That’s what Thomas understands. This is a guy that it’s really about his messaging and helping me getting things across. He’s the perfect guy for it. Believe me, he wouldn’t be here if I didn’t think he was the perfect guy for it. He is going to help us along the way and he is going to play some football for us. But, I think what he’s going to bring to the table is a little bit more than just being out on the field. It’s the impact he makes in the locker room, the impact he makes in the huddle, the impact that he makes off the field. Those guys are invaluable because they can sit there and they can tell guys. I promise you some point in time, Kyle Allen has told Dwayne: ‘Hey, you know what coach is going to be there behind you.’ I watch them do that when Cam was the guy, I watched him do that when I was the guy. I know that he’s probably helped Dwayne that way. [LB] Jared Norris, another guy that’s a special teams guy, has probably told a couple of those young guys: ‘You go out there and bust your hump, Coach is going to recognize that. He’s going to see that. There’s value to that.’ You’ve got to have a few of those guys. I think having those types of guys, that do give you that type of effort, that’s pretty exciting.”

On his conversation with Haskins Jr. about starting:

“Well for the most part, a lot of that stuff is reflected in our initial conversation. Every time I’ve followed things up with him, put my arm around him, talked about things that happened, talked about things that are going to happen—those are things that he and I have and will continue to have. I just think, again, I made a commitment 10 years ago to another young quarterback and just told him: ‘Hey, you know what, I’m choosing you because I believe in you.’ That’s really how I feel about Dwayne. He’s lived up to his part of our conversation in January. Because of that, I’m living up to mine. He deserves the opportunity. He’s going to get my support. Hopefully we can ride it as long as I road it with Cam. You want to be able to have that guy and have that guy in place. You want to be able to have the other guys in place as well.”

On if he sees similarities between Haskins Jr. and Newton:

“Oh, yeah. First of all, it’s the desire to win. That to me is one of the overriding things that they both share. In similarities, their work ethic. They both have worked hard in their offseason getting themselves ready, and the way they prepare. That to me is a delight, that you have a guy that’s willing to commit to the preparation of it and it’s not just about showing up. Probably the biggest difference to me is Cam is big. Cam is thick. Dwayne to

me is still young and dangly and still filling in. But, Dwayne and him have the same type of ball. They throw a good football and it's a catchable ball."

On if he has named a primary backup quarterback:

"No. The only thing I did today is talk to the guys about who our starter is."

On when he will decide the backup QB:

"The 13th."