

WASHINGTON

FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER - LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

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Head Coach Ron Rivera

On his concerns with the depth on the offensive line:

“Well, I’m not too concerned. I like our depth. We kept a number of offensive linemen for this specific reason. So, if [T] Morgan [Moses] can’t go, we’ll plug in and we’ll go from there.”

On T David Sharpe’s progress:

“[He’s] coming along well. He’s doing some good things. He’s a big, physical football player.”

On signing CB Kendall Fuller in the offseason:

“I think that was our thought. I think as a group, Kendall’s name came up obviously because he was a free agent. I got a chance to watch tape on him from Kansas City, also knowing that he had been here before. It was a pretty natural move for us to go after a guy like that.”

On how he will travel to Cleveland:

“It’s a shorter trip, so I’ll travel with the team tomorrow.”

On if he liked traveling privately last weekend:

“Yeah. That was fine because it was an extra day. When we’re traveling and it’s down-and-back it’s no big deal. But, it’s that extra day of leaving right on the day I had my last treatment. It’s kind of nice to just relax and not have to hurry or anything like that. Today I should be done around 2, 2:30 so I’ll go home and relax and enjoy it.”

On if there are advantages going against first-time head coach Kevin Stefanski:

“You could say that, but he’s in the same boat. He’s never gone up against me and I’ve never gone up against him. I don’t know if there’s any advantage one way or the other.”

On when position flex became important to him:

“Well, when I was in Carolina as a head coach. You kind of always want to have that idea and think about it. But, I learned it watching some of the teams that I’ve been a coordinator on. You have a guy that can play more than one spot, and all of sudden one or two guys go down, you can plug that guy in. Having a 3-4 defense when I was in San Diego, we had a guy that could play every position except for the nose. He could play the three, he could play the five, the seven, the nine and he could play SAM, WILL, MIKE, MO. He was as versatile as they get. I always felt guys with versatility are important. Then we played a game when I was in San Diego with Norv Turner as the head coach where we lost two offensive linemen and we lost a third, and we had to plug a kid that could play right tackle at right guard—he got us out of the game. We actually won the game and we sat there and went: ‘Wow, position flexibility is important.’ That’s kind of how I came about it. It’s just one of those things that you see guys that can play more than one position—they have value because of that situation. It’s a little different this year because of the ability to pop players up from the practice squad. You don’t necessarily have to worry as much because you can pop a guy up and say: ‘Wow, we were in that position.’ [WR] Cam Sims is a great example. We needed Cam, we were able to pop him up twice. Now with [G] Brandon Scherff down with short-term IR, we were able to put him on our active 53 now.”

On if they handle traveling differently during the pandemic:

“For the most part, we do. We have to try as best as we can to socially distance on the busses. Then you get on the airplane and it’s a bigger airplane than we’re normally used to and we’re trying to socially distance. We’ve cut our travel party to the bare minimum. We cut it to the point where [President] Jason Wright doesn’t travel with us. Our [Vice President of Player Personnel Kyle Smith] doesn’t travel with us, our [Director of Pro Scouting Eric Stokes]. You don’t have the room, so you’ve got to cut people down. Then you get into the hotel and you obviously—no one can share a room so everybody gets their own room. You kind of put them in the bubble and ask them: ‘Hey, you shouldn’t leave. We prefer you not to leave. If you’re going to do anything, go out and get a little exercise. Walk and come back.’ That’s pretty much it. You try to restrict their movements when they’re at the hotels and that’s because of the pandemic. We still have to figure out how we’re going to test and we’ve got to check everybody’s temperatures. There’s a lot of little details that have come up. Again, it’s all for the safety and player health. I think that’s important.”

On if he learned from coaches in other leagues about coaching during the pandemic:

“Not really. We paid attention to it as a league trying to figure it out and trying to understand it. That was kind of the difference that they have a hard bubble. We have a soft bubble. We test every day and I think the testing every day is one of the things that has helped us manage it because the players know they’re getting tested constantly. I think the players have made a lot of good choices and a lot of good decisions right now. We’ve been very fortunate that that’s kind of what’s happened for us.”

On if they check on players in their hotel rooms:

“We do a bed check in the evening, obviously, at 11 o’clock. But we have to do the contact tracing. That has been really good. The contact tracing—like right now, [Director of Communications] Sean [DeBarbieri] has to walk away for a few minutes because we’re so close together. You’ve got to break that contact and you have to pay attention to it. It’s all a part of it. But, that’s probably the biggest tool we have right now.”

On if the league mandates and uses the data from the contact tracing:

“The league and the team monitor that data. The data goes to [NFL Chief Medical Officer] Dr. [Allen] Sills’s people who monitors all that stuff. They look at it and send us a notice: ‘Hey, you guys have to be careful with this.’ Or, ‘Hey, we had a couple where some of your contacts are a little too high over here in this area.’ The same thing for [Head Athletic Trainer] Ryan Vermillion. He checks it. He’ll come to me and say: ‘Hey Coach, just looking at this we’ve got a couple guys in this position group.’ So I go and tell the guys, ‘We’ve got to make sure we’re smart about it. Just pay attention to your tracer. If it’s blinking red, somebody’s too close. Let’s move.’”

On if he would like to keep the practice squad flexibility:

“Yes. I think the rules this year give the coaches a lot of flexibility. I’ve got to admit, I like the 80 guys coming to camp. Because 90s—it’s good because you get 10 extra guys—but with just 80, I think it’s a little bit more intimate. Guys get a little bit more reps. You really have to rely on that group. I think it also helps you in terms of how you schedule things. With 80 guys, you have to be really smart because you really can’t go past a certain length in practice or else you’re going to start risking injuries. I do like the IR, the short-term IR. Brandon Scherff’s a great example because instead of him just sitting there for four weeks or five weeks and taking a spot, we’re allowed to use his spot and now when he’s ready to come back we can use his spot back for him. You can pop a guy back in his place for that period of time. I like the pop-up rule. Whoever came up with this—I know the NFLPA and the NFL worked together on this—I think there’s some really good things that they did. Hopefully we can find ways to keep it. I would love to be able to keep some of these things.”

On how to get the defensive line to play downhill:

“Well, again, I think it’s just work. [Cardinals QB] Kyler Murray kind of froze our guys. I think we were waiting for him to go out and react and do something instead of us being aggressive and going downhill and attacking him. I think that was the big thing more so than anything else. When you look at the tape, we spent a lot of time where we’d engage and now: ‘Where is he?’ Instead of just going. You get into your crease, you push, you get vertical, you flush the quarterback. The key to attack a guy like that is: if you let him move, he knows where he’s going. But if you force him to move, he doesn’t. There’s a difference. Because if he knows where he’s moving, he knows where his guys are. But when you’re forcing him to get out of his pocket and lose his bearings, that’s when you have the benefit. That was the hard part for us. We talked about it on the sidelines: ‘Let’s go, let’s go.’ But you see too much of it where we got engaged and we were kind of just dancing on the line of scrimmage. You can’t do that against a player with that kind of ability. You have to get aggressive and attack him and get him going.”

On if QB Alex Smith is progressing well:

“I think he’s almost at that point. It’s been really neat watching his progression and watching things come back. As we get into situations we start coming through the next few weeks, you never know what will happen. I don’t think I would have any trepidation having him active. I think now it’s just a matter of opportunity.”