

WASHINGTON

FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER - LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

October 5, 2020

Head Coach Ron Rivera

On his health:

“That’s pretty much what I’ve learned from talking with the doctors is that now, each day and each week is going to be its own. I have to listen to myself. I’ll be honest with you I came in this morning early. I did a couple things, I did an interview, I did a few more things, took a nap and then finished up a couple other things, took another nap and now I’m talking to you guys. I really just have to learn to listen to my body, listen to how I feel and listen to the doctors.”

On QB Dwayne Haskins Jr.’s performance against the Ravens:

“There were some things that were positive. Obviously, he made some good throws. He threw the long one to [WR] Terry [McLaurin] at the end of the game. It was consequential at that point, but again, doing the things he needs to do and showing the growth—that’s what we’re looking for. It’s a tough situation. We’re looking at our circumstances right now as a football team. We’re in a very interesting situation right now.”

On protocols with positive COVID-19 cases across the league:

“One thing is we continue to be vigilant. [Head Athletic Trainer] Ryan Vermillion is also our lead Infectious Control Officer; I believe it’s called ICO. He’s done a great job, he really has. He’s stayed on top of the rules. In fact, every meeting that we have with the league and the NFLPA he has stayed on top of that. We’ve tried to really reinforce what the rules are because you tend to get lax. You get tested every day, everybody’s been negative so far which is awesome, but you get lax so you have to have somebody that’s always kind of kneeling everybody and that’s what Ryan’s been doing for us, trying to keep us vigilant. That’s important because you have to be vigilant. If you’re not, something crazy might happen.”

On canceling free agent workouts today:

“We wanted to, but we said: ‘Let’s take a break. Let’s take a step backward and let’s review the process and let’s talk to the league also.’ We will have discussions with the league about this. We just want to make sure and get it right, so we did that. We apologized. We as an organization apologized to the players we brought out. This was a legitimate tryout. We’re constantly shaking the bottom of our roster, the bottom of our practice squad, to see if we can find players. Unfortunately, we had to turn some guys away and we truly do apologize to those young men.”

On how he maintains his energy:

“The reality of talking to you guys every day—are you kidding? I’m really fortunate, I really am. We have a good support system here with everybody in place in terms of I’ve got coaches, I’ve got players, I’ve got trainers and as I go through this it’s not all on me. That’s the thing that really helps me as far as the organization’s concerned. I really am. [Defensive coordinator] Jack Del Rio has done a tremendous job. Every time—and on short notice—I kind of dump it on Jack. Jack’s ready to go. He’s done this before. He did this for [former Broncos head coach John] Fox. It’s been a Godsend to have a guy like Jack who’s a veteran, who’s been a head coach, who’s been through some tough times and knows how to deal with it. He’s been terrific, he really has. I absolutely appreciate that. Plus, what [offensive coordinator] Scott [Turner] and [special teams coordinator] Nate [Kaczor] have done in terms of their side of the ball as well. Jack can handle the team, but at

the same time he can focus in on the defense when he has to. That's been very, very helpful. The fact that my daughter works for us because she drives me, she drives me home. She's constantly pestering me to make sure I'm taking my medicine; I'm staying on top of things. That's another huge plus for me and a huge benefit, it really is. Then the entire care at Inova with the nurse practitioners and the nurses that are assigned to me that are constantly checking in on me. It's not that I'm special, it's just that's the way that they treat their patients. I've been very fortunate as far as that's concerned."

On if he thinks about his circumstances since coming to Washington:

"No. Honestly, I haven't. I just think about what I have to do and I guess that's just keep going forward with what I'm supposed to do."

On S Landon Collins:

"I think Landon's been very physical. He's playing hard. I think sometimes Landon gets outside of the realm because he's pushing to make things happen. You go back and you watch the way—and this is true for a lot of our veteran guys, especially on the defensive side—as things get later in the game, you watch things get broken down because guys are trying to make plays. They're trying to force a fumble. They want to take the ball away, and then they get outside of it. But early in the game, you see the guys doing the things they're capable of, playing the way they're supposed to. That's exciting. Landon's one of those guys. He plays hard, he plays physical, all the time. He's constantly trying to make things happen."

On making plays:

"It is a good instinct, but at the same time you want to—when you're only down a little—you want to continue to stay within the framework. You want to be careful because you don't want to give up a big play."

On if anything has surprised him about balancing coaching with his treatment:

"Just how everything happens. I'll be honest with you, last week really kind of caught me off guard a little bit. I was kind of expecting it, but I didn't realize just how hard sometimes it can get you. It got me pretty good. It speaks to the courage of the folks that have gone through this. There's a lot of people that have dealt with and have come out on the other end for the better. That's what we're working toward. The other thing is just how incredible the people are that work at the hospital and how much they care about their patients. I'm just learning that stuff because I'm seeing it almost on a daily basis. There's a tremendous amount of work that these people do and they don't get enough credit."

On how he would grade the team so far:

"I don't give grades. I think the guys are playing hard. I think they're learning, developing and doing the things that they need to do. We've got a way to go, but I don't give grades."

On how he is as a patient:

"I'm normally a good patient when I'm listening to the doctors. When I'm listening to my wife I'm not, and she'll tell you that. But with the doctors, I try to do what I'm supposed to. I try to follow it. I try to be vigilant. I try to be vigilant and stay ahead. Like I said though, last week kind of snuck up on me a little bit more. It was a little more than I anticipated."

On being a patient and an NFL coach:

"The one thing they tell me is: 'Listen to your body. If it tells you that you need to sit down, sit down. If it tells you to take a nap, take a nap.' Seriously, that's one thing—the two doctors that I work with predominantly once a week, Dr. Bajaj and Dr. Deekan have been tremendous. They know what they're doing and they've been on it."

On being away from the field during treatment:

“It’s hard because as a coach you want to be there every day. That’s the disappointing part for me is I’m not there for the guys. My job is to manage and to get these guys prepared and ready to play and share the message. It’s tough. Like I said, I’m very fortunate to have a guy like Jack Del Rio working with me because Jack gets it and understands. He tries to impart that message that I have, but I’m the guy it’s supposed to come through. So, not being there—that’s the hard part. That’s what eats at me personally because my job is to work with our guys directly.”

On balancing the performance of the team and the current standings in the NFC East:

“That’s exactly it is right now we are in certain situations that have got interesting circumstances, and we have to evaluate those. We really have to dig deep into those things. We went through it in 2014 where everything stayed right there. It was right there for the taking. That’s something we have to talk about, something that we have to look at. We’ve got to decide what’s in our best interest going forward.”

On inspiration he gets from other cancer patients:

“I get a lot. I try to draw from those folks. They might not know who I am and I don’t know who they are, but I see them. I see them come in with their families and watch the way they attack it. But the ones that impress me the most—and I’ve only seen a few of them—are the children. It’s amazing. I was actually there the day one of the kids was going through his last chemo treatment. The people at Inova at the Cancer Institute were preparing to do the ‘Baby Shark’ song for the kid. I guess that’s what the Nationals did for their run, or one of the players. All of the doctors and nurses and all the helpers were rehearsing the ‘Baby Shark’ because when that last person was going to come out of their last treatment, they were going to do the song for them. I wish I could’ve stayed for it. You draw from things like that, you do.”

On how the defensive line performed yesterday:

“We had our moments. Again, unfortunately it was big plays that got you at the end of the day. You can’t take them away, but if you took away a couple of the big plays that we gave away with the big throw and the big run, the defense played pretty well. They played well enough at times to give us a chance. Those are things we have to look at.”

On how Haskins Jr. can improve on taking sacks:

“Without getting into specifics, we’d like to see him go to his immediate outlet or throw the ball away.”

On evaluating the growth of the offense:

“It’s a growing process, but I’ve been very pleased with what we’ve done offensively. I love that we’re trying to find ways to get the ball in [RB Antonio Gibson]’s hands and into [RB] J.D. [McKissic]’s hands, how we’re trying to use the tight end a little bit more, the different running schemes that we have, the different personnel groupings, how we’re trying to get the ball to Terry, how we’re trying to spread the ball to the other receivers. I think there’s a lot of good things that we’ve been trying to do. Again, this truly is Scotty’s first time, but last year he had an opportunity to run four games as a coordinator. I went back and watched those games in January and February and really dove in and got a good feel for what Scotty’s all about. I know who he is. He’s worked for me in the past before, so I have a good feel for what we’re doing. I’m pleased with it. I think this really is about us continuing to grow and develop and go forward.”

On the bubble and slip screens yesterday:

“Those were reactions to anticipation of their pressure packages. I believe we hit half of those for five yards or more. Again, if you hit them just right like we did you have a chance to hit an explosive. That’s what we were doing. This is a very aggressive defense that we were playing, especially with the lead. We were trying to get the ball out of Dwayne’s hands and into a playmaker’s hands.”

On what Haskins Jr. needs to improve:

“I think part of it is recognizing those things and getting us into protections and things like that as well. Those were all part of the plan. Like I said, the big thing was trying to stay ahead of their pressure package.”