

# WASHINGTON

## FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER - LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

November 30, 2020

### Head Coach Ron Rivera

#### **On the uncertainty of the Steelers game:**

“Well, the biggest thing we told the guys was be ready. We’re coming back to work on Wednesday. Just be ready for whatever happens. We’re kind of in that situation right now throughout the league. We’re kind of a touch-and-go. We’ll be ready.”

#### **On why DE Chase Young is being double teamed:**

“I think a lot of it has to do with the way he started. He burst onto the scene. He had some success right away, and people tend to pay attention to stuff like that. If you look at the people we’ve played and the things that they do, a lot of it does play into the way we attack guys. I think a big part of it is his initial couple of weeks. Then, most recently, I just think the success that we’ve had as a defense people look to the premier rusher, the right defensive end position and say: ‘We’ve got to handle that guy.’”

#### **On maintaining the roster to account for COVID-19:**

“We try to make sure our guys understand that specific people have to be smart and have to make sure they’re keeping themselves away from the contact tracing as much as possible. Initially, we had four quarterbacks so it was a little easier to do. Now we’re down to three and we have to make sure [QB] Steven Montez is aware of it. They’ve got to maintain the social distancing. The kicker that we brought in is a kicker-punter, and it’s the same thing. He’s in certain meetings, he’s social distancing during certain meetings, he’s social distancing during practice, he works off to the side on his own sometimes, stuff like that. We try to make sure that on certain times, backups, the practice squad guys, understand that they’ve got to stay separated. So, we’re trying to reinforce that even more so now. It’s something that we’ve talked about as a staff this week is that we’ve got to make sure these guys all understand they’ve got to maintain the social distance.”

#### **On if they considered quarantining a quarterback:**

“We didn’t necessarily stash them away and keep them in touch virtually. We did have them in meetings. We did have them out at practice, but again we’ve tried to make sure we maintain that social distancing. I think that’s really important.”

#### **On helping players through an uncertain season:**

“You’ve got to talk about it. That’s really the only thing we’ve done is talk about the situation we’re in and try to make sure guys understand how important it is to be adaptable. That’s the biggest thing. I’ve told the coaches this and I’ve told the players this, we can’t make a big deal if something changes. When you start worrying about that, what was interesting becomes important. That’s not what we want to happen. It’s not important. It’s interesting, it’s different—OK, we deal with it and we move on. That’s the thing. It’s like, having been in Carolina and having been in certain places that didn’t have indoor facilities, so you have to go out and practice in the elements. If you make a big deal about practicing in the elements, you’re not going to have a good practice. That’s what we’ve got to be able to do. We’ve got to focus and handle the situation.”

#### **On testing the team against the challenging opponents coming up:**

“I’m very interested because, again, these three teams will certainly be measuring sticks for us. Right now, in the AFC, Pittsburgh is the elite. Then we’re going to go up against San Francisco who was the elite last year and they’re finding their way back. Then Seattle, who’s one of the elites right now. It’s going to be a good test. We’ll see how we’ll handle it. We’ll see how we handle it as a coaching staff and as players.”

**On if the idea of the NFL not finishing the season has crossed his mind:**

“Yeah, it has to be honest. But we’ll see what happens. It’s one of those things that, if something happens and we have to pause for a week, well then it’s a bye week for everybody and then we pick up where we left off. I think that’s most certainly a doable thing if that’s what we have to do. But I do think we’re committed as a league to trying to play every game and then get into the playoffs and have a regular playoffs and then have a Super Bowl. That would be a huge victory for not just us, but for our fans and quite honestly for the nation. If you do things the right way, if you follow the protocols, you can get through these things. I think that’s part of what we’re trying to show everybody is that by following the protocols, wearing the mask as much as you can, social distancing like you’re supposed to and then personal hygiene—maybe it helps. Maybe it gets other people to say: ‘Wow, look what they did. This is a group of people that were committed to doing it.’ Hopefully we can. We can accomplish that.”

**On monitoring the situation in San Francisco:**

“We are monitoring it, but the one guy that it affects right now more so than anyone else is our Director of Football Operations Paul Kelly. I’m going to let him do all the worrying, and I’ll try to get everybody hopefully focused on Pittsburgh.”

**On future technology to track the football:**

“Well, I think there is and I think we’ll develop that. But again, let’s remember for the most part the referees are running and they see angles and stuff like that and they try to see where the ball is. They do the best they can. I’ve heard everything from people saying they’re going to put a GPS in the football and they’re going to have sticks that are going to have the counterpart to it or whatever. There are some thoughts or conversations about the best way to fix it, but right now we’re working with the human element of it. We’ve got to understand that the refs are doing the best from the angles that they have. Again, it’s frustrating for me sometimes. But, we just have to understand that’s the part of the game we’re living with and that’s the human element. I’m not sure you take the human element out of the game anyway.”

**On focusing on what is important rather than interesting:**

“Most certainly because, again, when you look at the division race and look what we have to do, we’ve got five games left all of us. Well, Philadelphia plays today, but we all have five games left. The key is how you do each week. We’ve got to focus and put a lot of focus in on getting ready for Pittsburgh. Again, they’re undefeated. They’re the elite of the AFC. They’re playing very good football right now, so we’ve got to figure out our game plan and then learn it, practice it and then see what happens. In the meantime, each other team has to do the same thing. Everything else is inconsequential as far as I’m concerned outside our division. I’ve been through this and I know when you focus on what you have to do, when you focus on your next opponent because it’s the next most important game you have to play, you give yourself a better chance. But when you start worrying about: ‘Oh, what if this happens?’ No. You can’t control that. Control what you can. That’s what gives you the chance to be successful.”

**On utilizing trick plays during the game:**

“It really is about feel and opportunity as far as those things are concerned. I think the thing that everybody has to understand is there’s no measuring stick. There are no data or analytics that tells you now is the right time to run a fake or now is the right time to run a trick play. You can look at situations and say: ‘Man, if I get that situation now is the time.’ One of the things that we do look at in analytics is it tells you when certain teams

have certain tendencies like a lot of times when a team gets to around the 50-yard line and it's first-and-10, it's a play-action, take a shot. But, there's nothing that says that when you're backed up and it's fourth-and-9 or whatever it is that now is the best time to run a fake punt. Nothing tells you. In certain situations what does tell you is your gut says: 'OK, we've got to get some momentum. We've got to do something that gets the momentum.' That's probably what [Cowboys Head] Coach Mike [McCarthy] was doing. He was probably thinking: 'If we can get this, man it'll flip the motions. It'll flip it and give us a chance.' That's probably what he was thinking. That's probably why he did what he did. As far as we were concerned, we made a couple of plays. We had some momentum. We had them back on their heels. Now is the time to make the tight end pass. We got the ball down into the red zone. Now was the time to run the 'Annexation,' the 'Bumerooksi.' So, our guys just felt that's what it is. Just so you know, we only practiced the Bumerooksi twice last week."

**On moments of frustration playing through a pandemic:**

"It really is. As far as we've gone so far, sometimes it does get frustrating. It really does. I'll be honest, we're in the super protocols right now where we can't go in on Monday and Tuesday. I'm a person where I'm not fond of the Zoom concept, holding meetings with Zoom because it's hard to see everybody's reactions. Sometimes I say something sarcastic and I want to see the guys' reaction and I can't, and some people might take it the wrong way. So I've tried not to be sarcastic because sarcastic and humor does not translate. I've tried to be aware of that. So it's hard, and you get frustrated. Honestly, being told on Saturday that we were going into these next steps of protocol—that was frustrating. It really was. But, I understand it. I get it. We have to be safe. That's what [NFL Chief Medicine Officer] Dr. [Allen] Sills and his guys are trying to do is keep us as safe as possible. Like I said, if we can get through this and show everybody that by following the protocols and you give yourself a chance, then it's worth it. But to answer your question, I've had a couple of moments where I say: 'Man, this is tough.' It really is. Not to harp on my situation, but about a month and a half ago my routine was get up early in the morning, go to the hospital, come back, test and then go into the building. That became monotonous at some point. It was tough. I can only imagine what it must've been for Baltimore, for the Raiders, for those teams that have had hiccups. Tennessee, they dealt with that. To your question, yeah, there have been some moments."

**On watching the milestones females in football achieved this weekend:**

"I think it's really cool. I really do. I think what it signifies is that, first of all, a lot of these barriers are being broken down. I think that's important, especially today with the way society's changing. We've got to come to terms that this is our new reality. Women in professional sports that have been predominantly male, those doors are starting to get kicked down. We saw what's happening in baseball with the first female general manager. It's been a long time coming. First of all, there are so many women that have been involved in female athletics. It's just the first step in the right direction because it's going to give opportunities to everybody, not just certainly men but women as well. I just think it's good for us, it's good for the world and it's good for our business."

**On the long-term success of the Pittsburgh Steelers:**

"I think more so it's about consistency. If you look at them, they've had three head coaches in what, like the last 40 years? I think that's probably the big reason for it, if you think about it, with who they've had. They've had three and I think that's what it is, it's the consistency up top. It's been the same family owning it. It's been the same general manager for the last, I want to say, 20 years probably. Now, [Head Coach] Mike Tomlin is one of the longest-tenured head coaches in the league. I think consistency is probably the most important thing. They have a culture, and they stuck to that culture since they've been with [former head coach] Chuck Noll to Mike now. When you do that, you give yourself the same chance to be successful because the formula for them now is working."

**On the performances of the offseason acquisitions this year:**

“I think, first of all, it’s part of the formula that we did with intent. We did go after a couple of big names to be honest with you. But, the other guys that we looked at our guys that you sit there and say: ‘Man, these guys are ready to have these kinds of years.’ [RB] J.D. McKissic was somebody that we felt we could come in and be a part of what we’re doing. [TE] Logan Thomas is somebody that you felt really good about. I know [tight ends coach] Pete Hoener really liked him off of his tape and just thought this guy was ready to ascend. [LB] Kevin Pierre-Louis is a guy that we felt could come in and help as well. You look at these guys and think these are the types of guys that you want. You look at our offensive line and, I talk about position flex and flexibility, and we have guys that have played guard and shown it. They’ve played tackle, they’ve played the right side, they’ve played the left side. Those are the kinds of things that help you as you put your team together. Now, those guys may not be your starters, but they may be top-flight backups that are just as valuable to what you’re trying to do. If you can keep those guys around for a period of time, now it takes the pressure off going into the draft. That’s the other thing that we have to think about. You look at the wide receiver position and go: ‘Man, do we need to draft another guy? Or, do we have the makings of it? Is there a guy in free agency that you add into the mix of it and that guy’s a solid?’ You approach it that way. I can tell you right now, looking off of the defensive line, it’s taken the pressure off of us with those guys coming through and playing the way that they have. Again, we don’t know what’ll happen in the next five weeks. As we’ve pointed out, these next three weeks are going to be very tough. But, we’ll find out the character of this football team going forward. That’s exciting as well. To your point, you can go out and try to make a splash with the right guys there. If not, then you’re going to want to find the right guys in my opinion that are going to fit you and can contribute and take some of the pressure off going into the draft.”