

WASHINGTON

FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

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QB Alex Smith

On what he tells the younger players when facing a challenging opponent:

“I think, hopefully by now, you’ve learned. Even those guys, at this point of the season you’ve learned on a given game day it’s the best team that day. Certainly, when you look at the team we’re playing, a veteran team, they’ve had a lot of stability and consistency through the entire history of the organization let alone lately. So, I think you prepare yourself to go play. Hopefully, nobody I think is thinking anything other than going out and winning and dominating and executing each and every play. Certainly, you watch the film and these guys present a lot of problems and have a lot of good players. I think you prepare yourself to go out there and execute.”

On QB Dwayne Haskins Jr.’s growth:

“I think you realize pretty quick that no two paths are the same. Although we always get compared to one another and guys in the past and this and that, I think no two paths are the same. I think everybody encounters bumps in the road and challenges and they come in different forms. You have to work through those. You can’t let them sidetrack you. You can’t let them veer you off from where you want to go. You have to stay ready for whenever your next opportunity comes. I think that’s easier said than done for young guys. You’ve got to learn it sometimes. I think the stability, coming to work every day for Dwayne and just a learning environment and environment where he can develop—those are all positives for him to obviously continue to grow. I think time helps as well just getting back to football and getting back to learning and growing, which we’re all trying to do.”

On what he has learned about WR Terry McLaurin:

“I think, obviously, a little more front-row view for it, the competitiveness really jumps out. He’s extremely talented, but that competitiveness when it kicks in—you can see it in his eyes. He’s a guy that you want to get the ball to in those situations. Certainly, I think he’s grown into really accepting that role and really being kind of the bell cow, the guy that really gets us going outside on the perimeter. I think he’s embraced that challenge and really grown into it, which has been great to see.”

On what separates McLaurin from other receivers:

“I think exactly that, just being a team player and doing anything that we ask of him. That’s just who he is. Even when he came in as a rookie, he was a guy that was willing to do anything even on special teams, get out there and go. I think that comes from his past, especially in college having done it all there as well. I think he’s a guy that takes a lot of pride in that and doing whatever it takes to help the team and being accountable to his teammates. That selfishness, obviously, is a great example to everybody.”

On working with offensive coordinator Scott Turner:

“I’ve been really impressed. It was so hard to not have an offseason when we were installing things virtually. He had no idea—a huge chunk of that, he doesn’t get to see us practice and play and compete so he can really understand what we do well. I think a big part of being a coach is putting your guys in situations to succeed and have success. We were really behind the eight ball in that sense where he really only got to see us in camp. Then again, we didn’t have preseason games. I think with that we’ve done such a great job and I think he as the

leader of the offense has done a really great job of helping us continue to grow and develop and get better. You're doing everything you can to win week-to-week, but also being a young team, a young offense and new together, continuing to get better as the weeks go on. I think a big part of that, obviously, is that we finally get to play one another. We get to find out our strengths to create our identity."

On his relationship with Head Coach Ron Rivera:

"I think kind of the same answer. We were only really seeing each other on screens all offseason. Coach would pop in on our QB meetings, and he'd talk. But we really only see a face on the screen. That's been the hard part this year where you really don't have that downtime together where you really get to know one another and what we're about. Obviously with Coach going through his treatment this year and I think the consistency and toughness he provided every day and really baring it all to us I think really allowed us to see what kind of person he is, what kind of coach he is and, again, such a great example for all of us. Personally, yeah, I think those things in football when you go through the ups and downs, the week-to-weeks, the highs and lows, you grow together. You get to know one another on such a level that I think is unique. It's what makes this game so special with the relationships you build. We're still growing and still going. It's crazy to still be going and continue to evolve and develop."

On how the offensive line has held up so well:

"I think those guys have done an amazing job. There have been a lot of changes with guys moving positions. I think it's really a credit to all of them being ready. It really starts with [offensive line] Coach [John] Matsko and really the way they're coached and taught. They all have to be ready to roll. They're all constantly juggling and moving, and they practice it. I think when it happens, it is no big deal because those guys are all ready to roll whenever they're called upon. It's really a credit to those guys for being ready and being ready to go."

On if he feels defenses play him differently now:

"It's hard to tell. It's really hard to tell any of that as far as how defenses play me. Really, it's how they play us. Every year—you can't even compare year-to-year. This is a brand-new offense they're facing. Within that, just the last few weeks it's hard to identify because really defenses are getting ready for all of us. You have different trends and things throughout the season as well, so it's hard to get a feel for that without getting the answer from those guys directly."

On his relationship with Steelers QB Ben Roethlisberger:

"I think the longer you hang around, the more opportunities you have to be around one another. Especially as quarterbacks, so often times you do get opportunities randomly here or there with off-season's, Pro Bowls. We spend time together and I've had time to do that with Ben. He's a Hall of Fame player. I think the thing that has impressed me so much through the arch of his career is how much he's developed. As time has gone on, he's done it so many different ways. When he was a young guy, he made so many ad-lib plays and so many with his legs, the pump fakes, the breaking tackles. In the last five years or so to see how prolific he's become from the pocket and how good that part of his game is, how elite it is. With his age and how many games he's played and last year, he had the elbow problems and surgery and rehab and then to come out firing 10-0—it says a lot about him, not only as a player but I think the work ethic, the mindset that goes into that. You certainly appreciate it from afar."

On having players get their opportunities:

"I think our energy that we have that we play with, I think our youthful energy, guys that are extremely hungry and extremely excited to get their opportunity to go out there and help this team—it's a ton of fun to be around. When you step out into the huddle and have five guys that want to touch the football and want to make a play, I think that's what you want. We have great energy. We practice with great energy each and every day. That makes coming to work everyday fun because of that youthfulness and energy for sure."

On if he is concerned about the rising COVID-19 cases across the league:

“I know I personally don’t feel that way. It’s hard for me to speak for anybody else. I do know a lot of the sentiment so far is that a lot of times the safest place to be is in the facility or with each other. We test every single day, everybody that walks in, so a lot of times it’s reassuring every day you get that email saying that there’s nothing detected. As far as regards to playing, there are experts that are qualified to make that decision. It’s definitely not me. I think you trust the experts and go out there. We’re outside, it’s open air. Yeah, there is close contact at times, but I think there are a lot of smart people monitoring this and making those decisions, so we trust in them.”

On if his mobility has improved:

“I’m feeling better and feeling more comfortable. Definitely, I think that’s one thing—the ad-libbing, the escaping—that was in the back of my head because it’s really hard to simulate in practice with the jerseys on and the rush. It really is a game time thing. To finally get those reps and opportunities and feel more and more comfortable doing it, I do feel better and feel good. I feel good about still having the ability to do that to the left end or the right. I think the more comfortable you get, the more willing you are to use it.”

On how trick plays fit into an offense:

“I think misdirection is a part of any good offense, whether they get labeled trick plays or kind of gadgets. Every offense wants to keep the defense on their heels, and misdirection is a part of that. You don’t want to be predictable. Whether or not it’s in the form of a ‘fumblerooski,’ it’s usually not. I think that’s always something you want to have as a part of your offense. You always want to be counterpunching so to speak. You want everything to fit together. You don’t want the defense to be dialed into what you’re doing, and misdirection is a part of that, gadget plays as well.”

On what has stood out about RB Antonio Gibson:

“I didn’t get to see a ton of his college tape, so it’s hard for me to comment on his progression and where he’s come from. I think from his time here and the time that we’ve been together, I think the thing that really stands out as the weeks have gone on are the little plays that have gone unnoticed. A lot of times it’s the run when nothing’s really there and he still puts his head down and gets four yards. Whereas I think early on in the year, you’re always trying to make the big play or bounce it. I think he’s really done a nice job trusting his reads and eyes. There were a lot of runs in this last game that don’t show up on a stat sheet, but I thought he did a great job of getting positive plays for us when really there wasn’t a ton there. I think it’s always been evident the big-play potential and ability he has. It’s been really nice seeing him more and more comfortable. I think he has such a great knack of finding the endzone. I don’t think that’s a coincidence at all that he’s having so much success in that area as well. I think with that though, it’s a lot of the little things that go into playing the position play in and play out. You’re not always going to have the home run. But he is so versatile, and I think finding those plays that don’t show up big on the stat sheet but helps the team convert first downs.”