

# WASHINGTON

FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER - LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

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## Head Coach Ron Rivera

### **On what he considers success to be for this season:**

“It’s exactly that—I said it the other day, that we’ll show up and we’ll play hard. I think that’s important because when you do that, I think you pretty much tell everybody: ‘Hey, we’re getting it. We’re understanding what we need to. We’re getting things the right way.’ That’s important. I really appreciated that from the way our guys handled things.”

### **On the quarterback situation moving forward:**

“I think the first thing we have to do is we basically have to debrief the season more so than anything else. What’ll happen is we will get together tomorrow as coaches and we’ll talk about doing our evaluations. I will visit with the owner [Dan Snyder] at some point whether it’s tonight or tomorrow and basically talk to him about my intent going forward. From that point on, we’ll start the evaluation process of our football team. Obviously, the quarterback situation will be one of the topics of conversation.”

### **On having two young captains in WR Terry McLaurin and DE Chase Young:**

“It tells us we’ve got a pretty good foundation. That’s what’s exciting about it. To me, it’s having all the rest of the pieces as well. I think you start by your fronts, your offensive and defensive lines. I think those are important, and then you continue building around them. That is big. To give back to it, though, the quarterback is probably one of the most important things that we have to get done and get established. Again, like I said, that will all be a part of our process as we start going forward.”

### **On the key to sustaining success next season:**

“The key to it really will be the way we come back, and we approach the upcoming season. If we come back and we’re fat and lazy, we’re going to get the crap kicked out of us. It’s that simple. So, that won’t be acceptable. It’ll be my job, it’ll be the coaches’ job, it’ll be our leadership’s job in terms of player leadership to make sure we don’t do that. That’s the first step. The second step is making sure that we do a good job evaluating our current roster and improving it, and then evaluating our scheme and see if what we’re doing is giving our players the best chance to be successful. Then, we’ll go from there. I think that’s the start. One of the things that happened in the past was we were able to look at what we did, evaluate what we did, improve upon it, and we were able to take the next step. That is the most important thing is going to be, what have we learned from our history?”

### **On QB Alex Smith’s calf strain:**

“I think it was probably a little bit more, and it just took a little bit longer to heal up. Unfortunately, it didn’t get a chance to completely heal because we needed him back out there. I just appreciated the fact that he went out there and did what he did courageously. I really do. For him to battle through that—that was amazing. My hat’s off to him because he’s one of the most unselfish players I’ve ever been around.”

### **On if he would like to hire a General Manager in the offseason:**

“OK, so what’s going to happen is, again, at some point today or tomorrow, I will sit down and talk to the owner and we’ll talk about what my intent is going forward. From that point, I’ll have clarity as to what I’ll do, and then I’ll go from there.”

**On if any areas stick out that he would like to improve the most in the offseason:**

“I think us as a football organization can improve and get better moving forward. As we go through this evaluation process, we’ll make decisions on things that we’re going to change and things that we’re going to improve on and things that are going to stay the same.”

**On if he thinks Smith can continue to be effective as a quarterback in the future:**

“Well, that obviously is really—in terms of his health—really the only person that can tell you that is going to be Alex. We’re going to go from there.”

**On how COVID-19 limited the team this year:**

“It was very limiting, just because one of the things that you always want to get is the instant feedback. Part of getting that instant feedback is being in the same room as everybody and getting those instant reactions to the things that are going on and that are happening. I think not being able to do that being in person in terms of meetings, that limits you. I really felt it did. It was difficult. It really was. It’s hard to talk, but it’s easier to show, I think. Just from everything from the way we had to travel to the way we had to meet—those things really impact you. I know we had to find ways to work around situations and circumstances that put more strain on people. It was a difficult set of circumstances. Hats off to everybody that achieved it and hats off to our players for only having two guys having gone on COVID, one being an IR player and one being on practice squad as well.”

**On his health and his recovery from treatment:**

“I’m doing well health wise. At the end of the month, it will be my big scan that I’m supposed to get. We’re anxious, I’m anxious about that.”

**On if he expects major staff changes:**

“No. No. No.”

**On how Smith’s injury impacts his thought process for the quarterback situation moving forward:**

“Well, again, we’ll get an opportunity to go through this tomorrow and the next few days and come up with our plan of action that we’re going to use going forward.”

**On his phrase that the team is ‘on the way up’:**

“The big idea behind that is we got to playoffs, and everybody’s excited about that. That’s great. But that’s not the goal. The goal is to win the Super Bowl. Being on the way up is referring to the fact that we’re still rising. We’re still working to get to what our ultimate goal is. It’s like that old saying that the team that ends up on top just doesn’t land there. They had to work their way up. So, we’re on our way up.”

**On the fanbase believing in the team:**

“That’s the whole idea. That’s one of the intents when I got here, and you guys heard me say that. We’ve got to get these folks behind us. This is a great fanbase. Historically, this is one of the best fanbases in the league. As a former player and coach coming into here, whether it be old RFK [Stadium] or when they first started at FedEx, to have this fanbase behind us is going to be a boost. As I said, the only way to do that is to go out and give them something to cheer about. To me, it starts with playing hard, showing up and playing hard, and giving these folks a reason to show up, a reason to get behind us. If that’s what we’re doing, then great. That’s what we’re hoping for. That’s what I believe our players want. Can you imagine what it would have been like

yesterday to have those fans behind us and help get us a little momentum and knowing when to cheer for us and knowing when to boo the referees when they missed a call? Hint. Anyway, that is what I'm hoping that we can do as a football team, and that is to get those folks behind us again."

**On offensive coordinator Scott Turner's growth this year:**

"It was fun to watch. It really was. I've been fortunate that I've got to deal with a lot of young coaches in my coaching career and watch those guys take steps and become really good coaches. That's where I think Scotty's headed. He did a really nice job with us. We had to struggle through early on not having OTAs and minicamp and a regular training camp to trying to get to know our players and develop our schemes. It's the same thing for [defensive coordinator] Jack [Del Rio]. I know he's a veteran coach, but he had to do the same thing. He had to learn our guys on the run. But to watch Scotty know how or to see how to use players and to load them up or scale back—that was excellent. How to attack and then to adjust in a game I thought was great. It really was. There were a lot of great things. I just know there's going to be continued growth. I'm excited for the future of our offense as well."

**On what he will remember from this season:**

"How proud I am of these guys, of our players. I've been very fortunate. I have. It's my tenth year as a head coach. But other than the 2014 team in Carolina that was 7-8-1, I think this team—I will remember this team probably the fondest just because of how resilient and how tough-minded they were and how much they went through and how they were able to keep their focus on football. I got a chance to meet with most of our guys, a lot of our guys just now. To have a couple veteran guys tell me that this was the most fun they'd had, that it was amazing how we were able to keep our focus on football, how good that was—I will remember this year more so for the guys, for the players more so than I will for any other reason because of how mentally tough these guys were. They went through a lot, and yet they persevered. How much joy they had last week in terms of winning on Sunday and then the whole week of preparation, the excitement, it was really cool. As I get a chance to reflect, I think I'll remember the guys, the team, the players, more so than I will anything else in 2020."

**On players expressing their love for him as a coach:**

"It makes you feel good because you've earned their respect and their admiration and their loyalty. I appreciate that, but I also reciprocate that. When you look at guys like [G] Brandon Scherff that had a knee injury and came back after three weeks and played and played to the level that they did—that's impressive. That's a guy that's in it for the long haul. That's a guy that's in it for his teammates. Those are the kind of guys that you remember, that you appreciate. That's really cool. It really is. When you get guys like Terry McLaurin and Chase Young, two young guys that want to be a part of it and want to lead—that's impressive. We've got a good foundation. We've got to add onto it, and we've got to strengthen it so as we go forward, we continue to get better."

**On memorable moments in the locker room with the team this year:**

"Wow. Gosh. I know there's quite a few of them. It goes back to the Pittsburgh game and just seeing the euphoria. That was an amazing thing, that really was, just how excited they were. It was one of those things, too, that they didn't shrink from the challenge. They rose from the occasion. It really does something for you. The San Francisco game, going on a short week, going out there and then playing to their abilities—that was cool. There were moments like that where you just sit there and go: 'Wow. This is something else.' Then how they approached Dallas. I played for the Bears, and I thought that was one of the greatest all-time rivalries period. But then to see the Washington Football Team versus Dallas, that's impressive. When we won that game and to see that attitude, that's another one. Those moments inside those locker rooms after those games, those are very touching moments. Unfortunately, you guys don't get to see that, but that's a pretty cool thing. It really is. Then last night, even after the loss, to watch these guys go around the locker room and dab each other

up and hug each other and shake each other's hands and pat each other on the backs—that's a cool thing. It really was."

**On if he has considered being a spokesperson for cancer treatment:**

"Yeah, I have. I'm hoping to get the opportunity. I'm actually working with somebody on something that should hopefully be pretty cool. Hopefully when it all comes out you guys will get a chance to see it. I do think that there is a need for it. I'd love to advocate for it and help out."

**On if Smith's leadership can be replaced:**

"You can't. There's an intangible that some guys have and possess. Alex has it. Can it be replaced? Well, you're going to have to find a guy that has those same types of intangibles. Those guys are special. They only come around every once in a while. Alex has that type of intangible. Part of it I think is some of the experiences that he's had in his life, the games he's played and obviously what he's gone through."

**On if Smith's leadership complicates offseason decisions:**

"I don't know. It's something that we'll most certainly have to look at and talk about, that's for sure."

**On where they stack up in the division going forward:**

"Well, I just know this going forward—we'll have the target on our chest because we're division champs. I think saying where you stack up now is irrelevant to what you're going to feel about it come September. That is when you really say this, that, or the other thing. Obviously, we would have loved to win one of the two Giants games, that's for sure. But I still think, again, the way we played down the stretch winning five out of the last seven and then obviously getting into the playoffs was a big step for us, a huge step."

**On if he was told that the punt S Troy Apke ran into the endzone may have been a Tampa Bay fumble:**

"Nobody said anything about it to me. We were trying to see. We couldn't tell. We kept looking. I kept having guys look whether or not he touched it. We couldn't see it. It's unfortunate. Then the next big debate we had was, based on the rule, if you possessed the ball for a certain amount of time you could hold the ball and walk it back into the endzone and take it back to where it was first touched. So that much I heard. When we asked and we were looking, we couldn't see it."

**On the team's name moving forward:**

"I'm confident in whatever we have. That's something that I'll hear from Mr. Snyder and from [President] Jason [Wright] as far as that's concerned. Until we get to that point, whatever we're going to call ourselves, we're going to call ourselves. It'll be the Washington Football Team until then."

**On the defense's next step:**

"I think finishing off what we feel is the few pieces we need to solidify that group. We found out a little about a lot of our young players. We have some ideas as to some positions that we can strengthen and improve on. We can be even better."

**On what he learned about having extra responsibility as a head coach:**

"It's a lot. It's a lot of responsibility, it is. But it also tells you you've got to have a lot of great people around you. I thought the coaches handled it very, very well. The thing that I really ended up doing a lot more this year than I had ever in the past was really managing. I think that was a big part of it was that I was able to find a groove in terms of managing the football side. I felt that was something that I didn't expect."

**On the feedback he got from the players on the athletic training staff this season:**

“It was amazing to hear that from the first week all the week to the last week just listening to the guys talking about: ‘Man, it’s different. The feel’s different. The vibe is different. Gosh, this is great just being able to come down here and get these things taken care of.’ The other day, I was just asking a couple guys about how things were going all things considered. They said: ‘Coach, all things considered, this is phenomenal.’ I said: ‘What do you mean?’ He said: ‘Gosh, we were able to come in and feel good about getting treatment and working on our rehab treatment.’ There was a lot of positivity coming from the players.”

**On how much he is looking forward to a normal offseason:**

“Well, the best part, too, is not having to talk to you guys, gosh almighty [laughs]. To be honest, I really look forward to it just being normal, to just football. I really do. I’m excited about it. Hopefully, things will start to settle down, we’ll get the vaccine rolled out and we can slowly get back to normal. I hope that by the time we get into OTAs or minicamps we’ll be able to see each other in person more. I’ve said this before and I do mean this, I look forward to seeing [reporters] in person. I really do. I think working relationships are important in this business, just so we all have a working understanding of who each other is and just how difficult what we all do is. I get how hard your guys’ job is just because it’s so competitive. Your push to get information is important in what you do. I appreciate that and I respect that. So, to be able to get back to some sense of normalcy, I think is important. For me personally, I really do look forward to it. I can’t wait. Just being able to worry about football and 53 players and coaches and our operations people will make for a much easier life, that’s for sure.”