

WASHINGTON

FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER - LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

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Assistant Running Backs Coach Jennifer King

Head Coach Ron Rivera opening statement:

“As you guys know, we’ve been busy the last couple of weeks putting our staff members in position. One of the things that we did do is we re-signed all of our coaches. One thing that we also did do was we promoted Jennifer King to a full-time position, assistant running backs coach. Jennifer’s done a great job. One thing I have noticed with Jennifer is, every time I have increased her responsibilities, she stepped up to the plate and has done a great job. I think with this move we’re going to see an even more competitive, more outgoing Jennifer King. I’m really excited about it. I think it’s a heck of an opportunity for her to show everybody what she’s capable of. When it’s all said and done, she’s done a great job for us. Thank you, guys, I appreciate it. Jennifer—don’t tell them anything important [laughs].”

On how she learned she was being promoted to assistant running backs coach:

“We were preparing for a game. I can’t remember which week it was. It was later in the season. [Coach Rivera] came by my office, and he let me know what was going to happen. That’s kind of how it went. I was excited, but I was in the middle of working, prepping for that week. I kind of just went right back to work.”

On what the promotion meant to her:

“It meant a lot. I’ve put in a lot of hard work over the last two years to get to this point. I was excited to be here in Washington, and then did a good job with [running backs coach] Randy [Jordan], and he did a good job with me, and here we are. I’m definitely excited for this next chapter.”

On if she hoped she would get back into football when she was coaching basketball:

“Not really, it was kind of one of those deferred-type things. I was coaching basketball, and I was happy. I was successful, things were good, and I didn’t really think about coaching football at a super high level until I started seeing [former 49ers offensive assistant] Katie Sowers getting opportunities in Atlanta at the time. That’s kind of when a lightbulb went off for me, and I started making a way.”

On joining Browns Chief of Staff Callie Brownson and league official Sarah Thomas as the first two women coaches and official to work an NFL game in Week 3:

“It meant a lot, just to be a part of that and be a part of that history. I’ve said before—I think, we were there, but that was for a lot of women in sports and a lot of women that work in football, just to be able to share that moment.”

On if she feels like a trailblazer:

“I don’t. I really think this is something that, 10, 15 years down the road we can look back on and I’ll really feel the magnitude of it. For now, I really don’t. I’ve been in the building. I’ve been working with the guys already. It doesn’t really feel a lot different for me now. I’m obviously excited for the opportunity and excited to still be here, but that’s probably something that I’ll look back on later in life to really appreciate this moment.”

On when she realized she could coach in the NFL:

“I think when I initially went to the Panthers. I thought I was going for two days for a rookie minicamp and ended up being there for four months. I think after I kept getting called back, the first time I got called back after the rookie minicamp, that’s when I really saw that I could do this because I’m here. It’s up to me now to see what I’m going to do with this opportunity. The hardest part of getting in the building and being there has been done, so now it’s really up to me.”

On what impact she is hoping to have on diversity in the NFL as a whole:

“I think it’s so important just to open up the entire pool of applicants when you have a position. So far, historically in football, it’s only essentially 50 percent of the pool. No women are ever considered. I think for future female coaches coming up, this kind of gets their foot in the door. It’s up to us to do a good job. I always say: ‘You’re not just going to get here. You have to put the work in. You’ve got to know what you’re doing.’ That’s one thing I love about the other coaches in the league right now. I feel like we’re all where we’re supposed to be. It’s not like we’re here for any other reason. It’s not for publicity. We’re here to work to make teams better.”

On her message to young aspiring girls:

“It’s important for them to know they can do anything. It’s been a great few months for women just in general of things that have been accomplished. It’s so important for them to know that they’re strong and capable of doing whatever they want to do, no matter what society may look like for them. They’re able to do it.”

On what it means to have representation in the league:

“I think it’s so big. Representation means so much. Essentially right now, we’re what we didn’t have growing up. I think that’s something that we don’t take lightly, I know I don’t. I think it’s really important right now to be a good representative, what I didn’t have growing up. I didn’t have anyone that looked anything like me working. To be able to see that I think is big. I think it’s super cool to be a part of this and just keep doing a good job.”

On having an ally figure like Coach Rivera:

“It’s so important to have those people reach back. A lot of us are in our positions because some people have reached back for us and helped us along the way. That’s what they’re doing. They’re realizing that there are females capable of working in football at a high level, and they’re giving them opportunities. It’s that simple. It’s crazy. They’re just realizing that: ‘There are people out there that can help us, and they may not look like everybody else, but I want to give them an opportunity.’ I’m thankful for that, but super thankful for them having an open mind.”

On her major influences in coaching:

“One of my biggest coaching influences—they’re not even in football. It was my first boss when I started in basketball, Jason Tuggle, who was at Greensboro College at the time. Then, I worked for Randy Tuggle at Greensboro College. Those guys really just showed me how to win, how to manage a team, how to have a pulse on your team and build those relationships that create wins. We won a lot of championships there. It was fun, and they showed that there can be two sides of coaching. You can have fun and win at the same time and have a balance of having a family life and not just being all sports. Those guys taught me a lot. I’m thankful for them.”

On what areas she has grown the most as a coach in the last year:

“I moved to the running back position I guess a little over a year ago or two in Carolina, so I’m just continuing to learn O-line play. Our guys are great runners, so you don’t always have to tell them how to run the ball. They got to the NFL, so they know how to run the ball. Just the small nuances of O-line play and our reads and our runs. Those are things that I’ll continue to develop. I really like the strides I’ve made this past year with that. I’ve built a great rapport with our running back room.”

On bringing a different perspective to Jordan and the running back room:

“I was in a unique position because I had been in the offense already for two years, in the receiver spot and in the running back spot. Then, I played quarterback, so there were a lot of different perspectives I thought I could bring to the offense. He was open, which was great. We built a great relationship from that end. I’m thankful for him as well just because of the mentorship he provided and just the relationship that we have.”

On her goals for the future:

“We’ll see. I’ve always been a coach that I’m happy where I am and doing my best there. We’ll see what happens. I was an assistant basketball coach for nine years, and I had opportunities to move on. But I was in a good situation and I was happy, so I did that. Right now, I’m focused on how we can be better next year. That’s my real focus at the moment, how we can make every player better and how we can make our team better.”

On how she came to coach running backs:

“In Carolina, the backs were the only position that didn’t have two people working with them. So, Coach asked me if I would be willing to move over to work with [former Carolina running backs coach] Jake Peetz with the running backs. I said, ‘Of course. Wherever you want to put me.’ I went over to the backs there, and Jake did a great job with the backs. He taught me a lot. Obviously, being able to work with [RB] Christian [McCaffrey] helped a lot as well. That’s kind of how I ended up with running backs and started really loving the position.”

On how RBs J.D. McKissic and Antonio Gibson elevated the offense this past season:

“They’re natural pass catchers. Their ability to make plays helped us a lot. In the NFL now, if you’re a running back that can catch the football, you have an opportunity to do a lot of great things. That’s something that they did for us, and something that we keep working on.”

On if she had moments of doubt this past year:

“Coach talked about being where your feet are planted, and that’s something that I did every day. I just stayed locked into the day. Get through the day and win the day. The days start stacking. I never really thought ahead as far as what could happen and what would happen. I just stayed in the moment and really did my best in that moment.”

On people reaching out to her after the promotion:

“Yeah, it’s been a bunch. I don’t think I’ve gotten through all of it yet, but I’m super thankful for it. There have been some cool stories of just kids seeing it and little girls wanting to get into football and things like that. Those are really cool. I’m still getting through some of those things. I haven’t finished them yet.”

On if she has noticed a commitment to diversity in Washington:

“Yeah, I think we went out and found good people for the spots they wanted to fill. That’s kind of how I feel about it. There are people of all races and genders that can do really good things at all levels of football. I think that’s what we did, went out and found people that work at different positions and work for our organization.”

On her goals in Washington and for diversity across the league:

“My goals right now are just to be better next year to make our guys better. That’s really what I’m focused on. As far as diversity in the league, I think [NFL Senior Director, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion] Sam Rapaport with the league is doing an amazing job putting qualified women in positions, not just in coaching, but in marketing, the business side of things, in social. They’ve done a great job doing that. Diversity as well is finding a way to get more black coaches in head coaching spots. I hope that’s something that we’ll see grow over the next couple years. There are a lot of great coaches that deserve opportunities. I would love to see them get it.”

On her standard as a coach in the NFL:

“When I first started with Carolina, that was one of the things that I immediately noticed was the standard of the NFL and how important everything was. If you’re supposed to be at five yards, don’t be at four, don’t be at six, be at five. That’s just something that I carried into my normal life with having a standard. We have to have something that we will accept and what we won’t accept. Once I accepted that higher standard for myself, things really took off for me.”

On the next step for RB Antonio Gibson and how she can help him prepare for next season:

“I’ve always been a big believer in sports that a lot of people take that jump from their first year to their second year. It was the same on the basketball side. I’m looking forward to it. I’m hoping that we actually can get hands on in OTAs to work on him. He’s still learning the position. He did a great job this year, but I know he can still learn even more and be a better back. I’m really hoping we can do that. If not, we can do it virtually. So, we’ll kind of see. It’s kind of up in the air right now what’s going to happen.”

On where the running backs and coaches can improve:

“We can always improve just as people. I like to see the guys just keep committing to learning the offense and every single thing that we have to know the small nuances that can help. There’s a big difference in this league if you’re able to turn a five-yard play into a seven-yard play, or even a six-yard play sometimes. I think that’s a big goal of ours to gain that extra yard or two on our plays, and I think that’ll really help out our offense. For me personally, just to continue to grow as a running backs coach and learn things, learn more nuances of the offense, the same nuances that we talked about with the guys as well. Randy and [offensive coordinator] Scott [Turner] have done a great job with that. I’m excited.”

On coaching against Buccaneers assistant defensive line coach Lori Locust and assistant strength & conditioning coach Maral Javadifar in the playoffs and watching them coach in the Super Bowl:

“It was so good to just see them. I haven’t seen Lo and MJ in so long due to this season and due to the pandemic. We just kind of caught up with each other and just talked about how things were going. She’s doing great. I think this week, at least two or three times a day, I text both of them like: ‘Girl, you’re going to the Super Bowl.’ It’s so cool to be able to see your friends achieving those things. I’m pulling for them.”

On her advice to young women seeking a career path:

“I’ve found that some of the people that have helped me along the way—they weren’t in sports. They weren’t coaches. Sometimes, you can just find good people to help you and guide you. They don’t necessarily have to be in what you’re trying to do. I think it’s so important to find somebody, some type of mentor. I was fortunate enough to find multiple.”

On what she learned from her mentors on the basketball coaching staff at Greensboro College:

“It wasn’t really words, it was just their actions, how they communicated with the team. They always had a pulse with each player on the team. They knew how things were. Obviously with a basketball team, you have 11, 12, 15 people. It’s different with football, but you can still have a feel and build those relationships with your group, and also with the team as a whole. Those are the biggest things is how they communicated and built those relationships.”

On Coach Randy Tuggle’s passing last year:

“It was tough. Because of the pandemic, I wasn’t able to really spend any time with them. We talked on the phone, and obviously I talked on the phone with him as well before he passed away, which was nice. He passed away from pancreatic cancer, and this season for our games I wore the purple bracelet. We went through so many big games together, so it was just kind of a way to have him with me on the field.”

On developing with Gibson as a rookie:

“It’s always nice to be able to have them from the beginning. You kind of mold them how you want. I think that’s something Randy has done a really good job with them. I’m excited to see where he’s going. He’s a dynamic talent. I think he’s going to have a great year next year.”

On if she has experienced negative outside noise over the years:

“I’ve been fortunate to always work with great people, great coaches. [Former Arizona Hotshots] Coach [Rick] Neuheisel, [Head] Coach [Buddy] Teevens at Dartmouth. It’s a great job. Outside of that, I really don’t care. If it’s not from in the building, I really don’t care that much. Randomly, I remember I heard a message from Dale Earnhardt Jr.: ‘Don’t listen. Don’t read the comments. Don’t go on social media.’ I followed that. I don’t even read stuff. I don’t care, ultimately. If it’s not coming from inside the building, I’m not concerned with people’s opinions.”