

WASHINGTON

FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER - LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

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Quarterback Ryan Fitzpatrick

On his thoughts on signing with Washington:

“Nice to meet you guys. Thanks for having me here. I think [Head] Coach [Ron] Rivera’s got a great reputation around the league from other coaches and from a lot of the guys he has coached. Just from being on so many different teams and so many different organizations and knowing guys around the league, I had a ton of great conversations about him. The respect level that he has from his peers and from his players and the way he goes about his business, I’m really excited and looking forward to getting to work with him. I think this team—it’s a young team. Making the push last year and making the playoffs, I think there’s a lot of excitement. I think everybody thinks it’s headed in the right direction. I’m just happy to be here and be a part of it.”

On what he wants to get out of next season:

“Well, I just love playing football. I love being out there. After this last season, it’s just—the climb that I’ve made in my career, I’m playing better right now than I’ve ever played in my career. I just feel like I’ve got a lot of great football ahead of me, which sounds crazy being 38 years old and figuring some things out about myself. I love football. I love the competition. I love the comradery. I love working together as a team for a common goal. Those are just things that I don’t know where else I’d find that. So, after last season and sitting down with my wife and just saying: ‘Look, I think I’m playing better than I ever have, and I still love this game.’ She just looked at me and said: ‘You’d be crazy not to keep playing.’ That’s a lot of the reason why I still do it. A side note from that, just having seven little kids that are able to kind of experience this with me and just see what Dad does for a living—that’s a lot of fun for me, too.”

On how he defines ‘Fitzmagic’:

“If you had to define it in a picture, I think you’d pick the one with [WR] DeSean [Jackson]’s jewelry. I think that’s really when it took off. I’ll tell you—I think there are just times in games where I just get excited. I try to play with passion. I try to make sure that rubs off on my teammates. If you talk to a lot of my former teammates, I think they’ll tell you they enjoyed playing with me. For me, it’s real. It’s who I am. I just try to bring guys around me up, and that’s what I’ve tried to do for the majority of my career.”

On the key to maintaining his beard:

“I found the right barber. I think that’s number one. It’s going to be tough moving away from him in Tampa, shoutout to Ali. Other than that, I’ve got to run a comb through it every morning. I don’t really brush my hair, but I do have to brush my beard. That’s about it.”

On how he has been able to play for so long:

“Some of it’s physical and some of it is the mental. I just think experience at the position of quarterback is so important. My experience has been a lot different from a lot of other guys that have played as long as I have in the league. I’ve just been in so many different systems. I’ve thrown to so many different receivers. But I’ve learned a lot about myself over the years. My throwing motion has thrown maybe a little bit, not much. It’s not like my arm’s gotten any stronger. The feel for the game, being able to communicate with my teammates, and

then just knowing myself and knowing when I need to pull in the reins a little bit and when I need to let it rip. Those are just things I've really learned over the last few years, especially that have helped me out a lot."

On what the offense in Washington will allow him to do:

"I'm actually about to sit down with [offensive coordinator] Scott [Turner] in a little here. I think part of it is, in the NFL in general right now, everything is going to be fit and tapered and designed to the players that you have. I think they're really excited with some of the talent that they're bringing in and some of the talent that they've had. I'll sit down with him and talk and just express—we've had a conversation on the phone—but just things that I think I'm really good at, things I'm not so good at, and just kind of mold the offense around the different skill position players we have and just go from there. From what I've heard about Scott, he's great to work with. He definitely has a base in terms of the offense that he wants to run. He's going to play to his players' strengths. I think the ability to kind of shift and mold an offense and cater it to the strength of the players, I think that's really important as an offensive coordinator. I'm looking forward to working with him."

On when his play started to come together:

"I think when I look at my career, I think 2014 when I got with Bill O'Brien in Houston and George Godsey as my quarterbacks coach, that was a turning point in my career. They helped me see the game in a different way. Since then, I just feel like I've become a much better player. 2016 was a rough year for me for a lot of different reasons. But from '14-on, I feel like I've just gotten better every single year. I had a chance to learn a couple different offenses from a couple different coordinators and coaches, and I just continue to incorporate things that I like about different offenses and things I've grown to like about my playing experience every year. I think it's really helped me."

On the challenges of learning new offenses transitioning from team to team:

"It's me. That's part of my story. Part of my story is skipping around to different teams and just trying to instill belief and try to show that I'm passionate to these guys. In Miami, it was getting some guys that maybe didn't believe in themselves before to believe in themselves and know that they're good players. Those are the things that I love as a quarterback being able to do. I'm really excited. Every time I go to a new place it's just a new opportunity, a new adventure, a new journey for me. I kind of get to reinvent myself every year at a new team and I have to prove myself. I have to earn the respect of the guys. Those are the things that get me really excited about this game. For this opportunity in particular, it's been the same thing throughout my whole career. I have to go out there, I have to earn it. I have to earn guys' respect by the way I play, the way I prepare, by the way that I present myself every single day. I'm looking forward to doing that."

On how Washington stood out as a landing spot in free agency:

"I was just talking to my dad about it the other day, it was interesting that in year 17, this was the most sought-after I have been in my whole career with all this free agency stuff. I think part of it was just the way it went the last two years, the adversity that we fought through the last few years and the way that we were able to turn it around in Miami. I'm just excited. I'm excited to be here. I just think moving around so much, there's different things that you see from organizations that you like, and you don't like, and you try to carry it with you."

On the offense and offensive playmakers in Washington:

"I've been getting the scouting report from my kids on Madden. They've been telling me about all the guys. I'm excited to dive into it. I've definitely watched some highlights and things from some different guys. But being able to dive into the film and actually be able to get together with some of these guys. Sometimes I'll—not to the media—but sometimes I'll put them in different categories and maybe compare them to different guys I've

played with in the past. That seems to be something that's helped me jumpstart or maybe even fast forward a relationship with a certain guy and a connection on the field."

On having the most kids among quarterbacks in NFL after Philip Rivers' retirement:

"He kept having them. When he got to nine, I just sent him a text and said: 'Look, I'm never going to catch you if you keep having these kids.' I think he might have taken the title."

On maintaining his arm strength at his age:

"It's never been about arm strength for me. I think I've always had a very average arm. It's just the timing and anticipation are big things. Some of the secret for me is rest and making sure that I take some time off in the offseason before I jump back into it. But it's never really been about the big arm for me. My arm is as strong as it's ever been. Those things aren't really going to jump out. It's more the timing, the anticipation, getting us in the right play. Those things have really developed as my career's gone on."

On playing with Washington's stout defense:

"I'm excited for that. I've played against some of these guys the last few years. Especially up front when you can generate pressure with the front four, that makes it really difficult on the opposing team. I'm excited just to get in and meet some of these guys. It's going to be a process. We'll see what happens here with the offseason and what we'll be able to do and not do. It's all about continuing to build on what was happening here last year and the comradery and bringing the team together for an even better result this year."

On what to expect from the offense with him at quarterback:

"I think my style of play, I'm going to give my guys chances. I'm not a guy that's going to sit there and be afraid to throw the ball down the field. I'm going to try to make the right plays. If I've got a chance and I've got my guy one-on-one, I'm going to give them a chance. I think guys like playing with me because of that. I'm able to instill confidence in guys because I give them opportunities. Just kind of playing with that absence of fear, I think, goes a long way. It's one of the reasons I still play, too, because I love doing it. I love giving guys chances. That style of play at quarterback is going away a little bit."

On if working with quarterbacks coach Ken Zampese previously motivated him to come to Washington:

"I actually just saw him right before I walked in here. We've been friends a long time. We've kept up. He's one of the first coaches that I've had that really taught me about X's and O's. I learned so much from him in the two years that I was in Cincinnati. I'm excited to reunite with him. Just this opportunity I think is a great opportunity. It's one I think I have a chance to be out on the field playing, and that's the biggest thing that I wanted."

On competing for the starting quarterback job:

"Just a chance. That's all I've asked for my whole career. I've just wanted the chance to have the opportunity to compete. I've probably had too much confidence in myself. That's just something I've always had that's been a huge advantage for me and allowed me to stick around for as long as I have. I've had the ultimate belief in myself. I feel like whatever situation I'm put in, if I have the chance to compete, that's all I want. I'm excited for the opportunity."

On dealing with seven children in virtual schooling through the pandemic:

"Well, we've been in Tampa and they've been in school, which has been a blessing for us. Everything has been smooth all year around, all year long. The virtual school last year—March, April, May—was interesting. We

had to buy a few more computers. I became a math tutor for a while there. It was a good refresher for me, not just in seventh but in fifth, third and first grade math.”

On his drive to reach the playoffs:

“I think it would be awesome. I would absolutely love to do it. There are other things that are extremely important for me in terms of team building and making sure this thing continues to head in the right direction. It’s a byproduct of some of those other goals that I have that I think would definitely lead to the playoffs.”

On testing positive for COVID-19 at the end of the 2020 season:

“It was rough. It was the ultimate high of Week 16 coming in against the Raiders and having the end of the game comeback then coming back three days later and finding out that now I had COVID. It went to the ultimate high to the ultimate low, sitting in a room quarantining for 10 days and missing my son’s birthday. It was a tough two weeks there. Just like everybody else in the country, we’ve done our best to try to manage it and stay safe. I know that my situation—it was tough, but there were a lot of people that had a lot worse things. I’m glad that part of it is over and none of my family got it besides me. That was probably the one positive of them being in Tampa last year and me being in Miami. That was the ultimate high and the ultimate low for me back-to-back weeks.”

On his approach to acclimating to a new team:

“The first thing is just making sure that I’m myself. I’m not going to try to recreate myself. I’m not going to try to become some character of what people think I am. I’m going to be 100 percent authentic to myself. I want to sit down in the meal room and get to know guys, whether it’s coaches or players. I think that stuff off the field goes a long way. With COVID, it makes it more challenging. You don’t really get as much time together inside the building. We’ll see as that goes on. A lot of it is just getting to know guys and making sure that they know I’m here and I’m trying to earn their respect and I’m working hard every single day. That formula for me has worked pretty much everywhere I’ve been.”

On if he has heard from any of his new teammates:

“I’ve gotten some texts from guys after the news broke that I was signing here. I’m excited. I’m excited to get started. I think every time you go to a new place it’s a fresh start. Again, it’s earning everybody’s respect. It’s everybody trying to do their best to show me who they are, and I’ll do the same for them. I’m excited for the opportunity.”

On his other options in free agency:

“Wouldn’t you like to know [laughs]? I’ll just say that [reporter] John Clayton, when he put out the rumor that I was retiring, was not a very reliable source.”

On the opportunity to receive playing time in Washington:

“That was the number one thing that I was looking for was the chance to play. This was a great opportunity I felt like, not just for that, but the general direction of the team.”

On having so many teams on his resume:

“In a weird way, it’s definitely a point of pride for me just to be able to last as long as I have and take the winding way that I have to get here. I’ve had a great time in every city that I’ve been to. My wife, she puts it best—every city that we go to is a new adventure, not just for me playing, but for our kids going to new schools and meeting new people. That’s the way we’ve always approached it. It’s been a great approach for us and a great life lesson for our kids.”

On how many teams he spoke to in free agency:

“More than three.”

On the first day at a new team:

“This day I’m just kind of getting pulled in different directions with media and signing a new contract and just meeting the coaches in the building. The first day when players are here—I talked to my kids about it the other day—it’s just like the first day of school when you’re the new kid. You show up and it just feels weird. You don’t know anybody, and you’ve got to try to make friends and everybody’s staring at you. As I told them, I’m going through what you’re going through. There are some guys on the roster that I already know, so it won’t exactly be that. But it’s a weird feeling when you walk into a new city and a new school and you don’t know anybody. Where are you going to sit at the lunch table? You go through the same thing. I enjoy getting to know new people.”

On if driving into a new facility is nerve-racking or exciting:

“It’s both. Is the guard going to recognize me? Is he not? Is he going to think I’m Conor McGregor? Is he going to think I’m one of the Duck Dynasty guys? Sometimes they let you in, sometimes they don’t. Then you’ve got to call somebody else and say: ‘I’m at the front gate.’ You get nervous a little bit. But once they let you in past the gates, then you don’t know where you’re going, and you go from there.”

On when he made peace with his path in the NFL:

“I’ve just had to scratch and claw for every opportunity that I’ve ever received. Even not really being recruited coming out of high school. I probably came to terms with that after Buffalo. I was there for four years. After I left Buffalo and jumped to Tennessee and Houston, I just think I came to terms with the fact that my career is going to be a lot different from other guys. I learned to embrace that. I learned to embrace the challenge of going from team to team and trying to get up to speed as fast as possible. It’s something that I take a lot of pride in. For the guys that have been in one place their whole career and the timing and the comfortability and things like that—I take a lot of pride in being able to do what I do and being successful jumping around from team to team.”

On if he sets out to prove a team wrong after releasing him:

“Not really. We always joke, especially being in the AFC East last year: ‘Oh, this is a revenge game.’ Every week is a revenge game for me because I’ve been on every dang team in the NFL. That stuff has gone away. That’s definitely gone away.”