

# WASHINGTON

## FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER - LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

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### Special Teams Coordinator Nate Kaczor

#### **On WR DeAndre Carter's kickoff return:**

"The trending is accurate. I believe that the positive signs that he was showing and we were showing as a unit early lends itself to confidence and belief. In the return game, there was a lot to that. I feel like the blockers feeling, if I get my block, we've got a chance. That's kind of been building and then there's been some efficiency prior to this. The explosion that came about was he set up his blocks and once he got to the seam where it was designed to go, it was really well blocked. John Bates on the left side on their safety, really got some good movement and that allowed him to beat the kicker. Usually you're going to have to beat the kicker or a safety to score. There was some room in there where he was able to do that."

#### **On if setting up blocks is a tough thing for a returner to learn:**

"So obviously that's a God-given natural talent. But in the design of it all, you kind of need to help them understand where to fix their eyes and where to run to set up the blocks. So once they head to the direction where the actual scheme is at, that sets up the blocking on that end before they get there. But setting up the man blocks away from the scheme usually is the key. Quite often, when you don't get an explosive return as that's happening, they aren't able to get over to the where this actual scheme is because the hardest blocks are obviously the one-on-ones. So a lot of natural talent. There is some design and set up to at that. If they understand that and execute that it just helps enhance their ability."

#### **On the difficulty of setting up blocks:**

"It's a challenge to get it to all match up at one time. I know that any of you that have visited with me before have probably heard this, but the difference in the return game as opposed to designing an offensive play is on offense you can put the back offset, you can put him seven yards deep, you can put the back or the receiver, you're handing it to anywhere you want. You control that. The line is always in the same place. You can add one tight end, two tight ends. But in the return game, you're dealing with the flight of a ball, where he's going to be adjusting to that and then blocking a guy. So to get all guys on the same page is a challenge."

#### **On K Dustin Hopkins FG misses:**

"Obviously, when things don't go the way that we want and starting with Dustin, he's the first one that when we don't make every kick, he recognizes that. We're all outcome aware and his field goal numbers have been darn good. He's 88% He's made all of his kicks between 40 and 49. He's attempted the second, most 40 to 49 yards in the NFL and tied for first on the most makes from that distance. With that being said, recognizing your question, obviously it's a topic that makes it even more annoying or frustrating, whatever word people want to use, that we were in an indoor stadium and two extra points don't go through. So with that being said, just by the numbers, there are some positives there that we have to build on and recognize. And it also blemishes what we need to work on, covering up and working through. And none of this has anything that we haven't discussed with Dustin, and that's a daily thing. When you coach somebody, you have a personal relationship with them, but we understand that if you don't make every kick, that questions arise. But there is some favorable data there and obviously we need to head back that direction quickly. And that's where the confidence comes from is that

there has been some good things there, but we needed to head back that direction quickly. And we do recognize that we can stay focused on the process and all these coach speak things, which are true, but we all also outcome aware. And the outcome of those helps our team win and we need to make every kick and that's the goal.”

**On the range of K Dustin Hopkins:**

“Obviously it's fun when the media covers special teams and when there's exciting plays and [Baltimore Ravens Kicker] Justin Tucker hits the field goal in Detroit. I mean those are so fun to watch and it's fascinating and we appreciate all the media attention that we get on special teams. And we realize that there's negative coverage that's necessary that comes when we don't make a good play. But just talking about his range, most kickers in the NFL are able to probably make something 60 and in. Dustin, I've seen him as recently as today, make over a 60 yarder in practice. The numbers tell you that when you get over 50 yards, it's about 50-50 over the years. Some kickers when they have a really good year, they'll make all of them. I believe there's a kicker in the NFL right now that's made every kick and try it maybe four over 50 and he's made all of them. But Dustin's got really good range. He's strong. And one of the things just speaking to his strength is those kickoffs in the Atlanta game, where they had really good hang time and we were kicking to a really good returner in [Atlanta Falcons WR] Cordarrelle Patterson, and that helps our cover teams. But that doesn't really to the naked eye or people watching the game produce points, but it does produce field position. So his range and strength is top notch. The accuracy part of where we were at in Atlanta is not where we need it to be, and we recognize that. But strength and range with Dustin when you're around 60 in the part of a game where you had to have something, you wouldn't be yielding field position If it didn't go in, we'd be comfortable around 60 yards giving it a go.”

**On the injury report and how it affects the special teams unit:**

“Just an interesting fact to that, [TE] Logan Thomas being a Swiss army knife, so to speak, he does some backup roles holding and things that you would never see on film, unless there was an injury during the game. So actually, getting the backups to the backups ready on roles that we may not see a year or last year. Those are key, but the guys that are coming up on the active roster to play teams, getting them ready with few reps. So a lot more film watching, maybe some extra study time and really that at the end of the day, it's convincing those players that aren't playing, or they're on the practice squad that this moment is coming and it's going to get here. And if they're not preparing way before they get activated, then they're missing the boat. So really it's about developing the culture of preparedness before the opportunity comes. And that certainly applies here, but obviously getting them as many reps as you can, and practice even leading up to is, is that's the critical thing.”

**On when to go up and talk to K Dustin Hopkins about his recent struggles:**

“The thing where the people outside the circle, so to speak, and not that that's a bad thing, but we're around Dustin daily. The definition of a struggle is to the outside world. And obviously it's outcome awareness when it doesn't go through the uprights. That's a fact that does not go away. You cannot explain that away. There's no excuse. That's the bottom line. We understand that. However, how we're striking the ball, what type of miss is it if it's in a 50 mile per hour wind or whatever those all come into play. So first is to recognize what a true struggle is. Man, we didn't hit that ball very good or hit a nice ball. Didn't go in because you, if you just go off of the result, when you're him or us, you're going to be on a roller coaster because unless you make every single kick in practice and a game, there's going to be some ups and downs. So the way to deal with that in my opinion, is to have a relationship built where you can transparently communicate problems and successes without changing. And like, why is Nate acting like this today? Why is Dustin acting like this today? So the more consistency we can have in our relationship to talk about things. And sometimes as we talked about prior

when there's an operation and there may be something that happens in practice with this or that, and we have to have the relationships to be able to have some tough conversations at times. So I'd say relationships where you can openly communicate effectively, and also really looking at the facts that look at your field, goal percentage, look what you've done from here, here, and here. Now this doesn't make as much sense when this happens. As you know, we're talking about Atlanta right now, that's where it's more of a, I can't really pick the word to describe it, but it's like this, this guy, this needs to go into everything and extra points. So that, that's the part, that's a little bit of a misunderstanding on my part of annoying or disappointing, whatever you want to say. That's the disappointing part. Not personally disappointed in him, but it's just like that. We're doing some really good things. Let's just make it so consistent. There's just no where to go with it in terms of negative. So true facts and relationships to communicate pluses and minuses.”