

WASHINGTON

FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER - LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

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Head Coach Ron Rivera

On TE Logan Thomas:

“Yeah, we do actually. The MRI results came back, they were better than we had anticipated. There’s obviously some damage there. It’s not as extensive as first thought, so we’re sending for a few more tests just to make sure. We’ll go from there. So we’re still waiting on a little bit more of an evaluation, but it is a little bit more positive than we were anticipating.”

On if he tore his ACL:

“That right now is the thing that seems to be positive is that it, and we’re just waiting to get confirmation and we want to make sure we don’t want to get ahead of it or anything like that. Okay. So, please just understand that.”

On this stretch of games in the NFC East:

“We’re at the part where we control it. I mean, for ourselves, for us, what’s gonna happen to, to the Washington Football Team is now you in our hands. We go out and play the way we’re capable of. We give ourselves a chance and that’s where we wanted to be. That’s one of the things we talked about when the schedule first came out, because you can get to this point and you have a chance. You have an opportunity now you’ve gotta make the best of it.”

On overcoming some major injuries:

“Well, I think part of it has been the depth. We’ve been very fortunate. Our personnel department has done an excellent job for us. Like I said, last year, we did some good things and we were able to build upon it this year. That’s been good I think. And then you gotta give credit to the positional coaching. I think the coaches have done a really good job in preparation. That we’ve had good depth that we’ve had players that we’ve been able to plug in and have them play because they’ve been ready to play. I think a little bit of it’s the philosophy of the way we go through training camp. We try to make sure everybody gets an opportunity to rotate through. And they’re either playing with the first group or the second group. They’re not always, if they’re a third string player or whatever, they’re never not getting that opportunity to work with the first or second group. And that I think gives us a chance to do some better evaluations. I think it’s also the way the players rally around each other. I think that’s also been very helpful, you know? I know you guys got the example a couple weeks ago, when [C] Keith Ismael had to go in and play, he talked about how the guys around him just helped pick him up. That’s important. And I think that’s, again, as I said, that that’s a credit to, you know, what our personnel department’s doing. It’s credit to what the coaching has done. And then the players themselves. I will say this too, if you look at what the coordinators is doing, I think the coordinators are playing to our strengths as well. So the play calling has been conducive to us having success.”

On how the coordinators have adjusted:

“I think the biggest thing you gotta give credit for, I think, you know, especially on the defensive side with what we’ve done and how Jack has evolved, I mean, we came into season thinking we could do something like this, and then unfortunately it hadn’t really come to light. Willing to change, willing to adapt and then having to, because the injury, I think does show his versatility as a coach. You watch Scott and you go through what we went through and talked about as we were coming out of being able to run the ball, being able to use the play, actually pass, and then, wanting to spread certain defenses out, you really have seen that kind of come to

fruition. It's also something people understand too is, you gotta learn to fall in love with the, the three-yard run. You know what I'm saying? The three yard run, if you ran two, three yard runs, you're now looking at third and four, as opposed to being in third and 10, so we've been able to do that. I don't know if you saw, but there was some things saying that Taylor's completion rate is in the seventies and being very efficient, these last several games, last four games or six games, whatever it is, he's been very efficient. And so if we're in the right down and distance, you know, we can exploit those situations and keep the change moving, which we've been able to do the last four games as well.”

On if there is ever a point in which he worries about how much the team can withstand on the injury front:

“Yeah, because we look thin at a few positions and the thing that’ll help us as though has been what our personnel department has been able to do. I mean, you know, talking to Marty and looking at the guys that we have up on the board, and then looking at the guys that Martin and Marty and our directors have looked at, what Chris [Polian] brings every time he brings the ready list and we go through those lists and then today's a great example. We got an issue with one of our positions. We grabbed the ready list and because our scouts are in right now, we were able to talk about some players that were on that ready list and had the scouts that do those areas come in and give us the presentation on these guys. And so as we got that presentation, now we're able to sit there and say, ‘Hey, this is the guy where that's the guy that we wanted to grab.’”

On DE Montez Sweat and S Landon Collins injuries:

Yeah, my understanding is as far as Montez is concerned, we're waiting on the, okay. Once we get the okay, he should be out there on Wednesday. And the same thing with Landon. Landon came in, got treatment. He looked actually very good. I know the doctors were gonna take another look at him, and we're gonna continue to monitor that the next couple of days. I am anticipating with my fingers crossed that he is cleared for Wednesday practice.”

On DT Jon Allen and if he came out of the game ok:

“He finished the game obviously, and I thought he performed very well. There was just little minor groin from what I understand, but he was able to finish the game. We'll see how he is today. When I get the medical report at 3:30, I'll have a better idea of where he is. So for the most part, though he obviously finished the game, played well, he did a couple of really good things and, you know, he's continuing to play top-notch football for sure.”

On what he saw form the game film and what he wants to improve on:

“Well, the one thing that was disappointing, we had really only had eight drives in the game and four of them were pretty much self-inflicted. We had a couple of penalties that we didn't overcome and because of that, the drive stalled. One of the things that was good though, was, you know, even though our field position wasn't necessarily great, we always moved the ball out from behind the shadows of the goal post. And if we did have to punt, we were able to punt and get them on the other side of the 20, which was very helpful. We had three balls inside the 20, so that meant they were going to have driven a long way. So that was good, but not being able to overcome penalties is something we got to be smart about. We were able to overcome a couple of negative plays, and then unfortunately the interception, Taylor's hand gets hit, just as he's released in the ball and that's why the ball fluttered out there and it was intercepted. But that's one thing you'd like to see us be a little better disciplined, not allow those kinds of plays to stop us. It's the first time it really kind of came up was this game, like I said, we only had eight possessions and four of 'them, we stopped ourselves, which was disappointing because there were penalties and as I said, that one ball that got tipped, unfortunately.”

On what led to giving LB Cole Holcomb the green dot:

“Well, Cole's had the green dot ever since we lost John [Bostic]. And he's done a great job trying to control and manage everything. I think what's happened is he's settled in that role. Now, you know, at first, when he first got started having to try and control everything, it was a little difficult for him. I had a conversation with him at one point about it, he said, well, coach, you know you break the huddle and I got everybody yelling at me, what's the call. I said, we just said it in the huddle. So, he's kind of adapted to that and has really started settling and is much more comfortable in that lead role.”

On the performance of the defensive ends in the last couple weeks:

“Those three guys really are very steady, as I've said before, blue collar style workers. You know, they're the kind of guys that they're going to go along. They're going to be very diligent in what they do. They're going to be very strict. You're not going to get a lot of spectacular plays out of them, as much as you're going to get just consistent play. And that's how they've been. And, you know, we've been able to keep that going for us. The guys that have really stepped in play well has been the inside charge. Those guys have really created some havoc. We had a couple of young guys that got a couple more of an opportunity and you saw them in those critical situations at the end of the game. Shaka Toney and, and Bunmi Rotimi. Those two young guys are guys that bring some juice, some speed off the edge, and they kind of got an opportunity to try and impact those last couple of plays as well. So, they've been very solid in terms of their production. We've seen a couple spectacular plays that Shaka has made and of all the young guys, I think he's a guy that brings electric juice for us.”

On what larger fan numbers do for the team:

“It creates energy that the players can play to. It was kind of an odd last year, not having fans. And when we got down that stretch, when we really could have used a little energy, it would've been great to have had them. Then it really would've because you know, we were fighting for a playoff position, and we were able to accomplish it. I could only imagine what it would've been in that first round against Tampa Bay. I'm not saying we'd won, but it'd been interesting and fun to see what would've happened and how it would've meant something to us having our folks up in the stands cheering us on and how the guys would've reacted.”

On what he thought of the hit on TE Logan Thomas:

“I thought the play was avoidable. It was unfortunate that the hit occurred, and it was low. As a defender you'd like to see him use his hands upon impact. I mean, it's an unfortunate play, but for the most part, as far as I was concerned, I just felt it was something that was avoidable.”

On the performance of C Keith Ismael:

“I thought Keith did an excellent job. He's an athletic guy who moves very well, reminds me a little bit of, of [Former Panthers Center] Ryan Khalil that we had in Carolina, very athletic guy that moves well laterally. Keith's not established as you'd like him to be, but he's a technician. The reason Tyler [Larsen] was dressed is we would've used him only in an emergency. Obviously, that's one of the positions we're thin at because Keith is our fourth center. Our fifth center is a guy that is tough, very inexperienced and we really didn't want to have to go there first. So fortunate enough for us, Tyler Larsen was ready to roll if we needed him. So, he was there only in an emergency.”

On critics to the strategy of controlling the clock:

“As long as we're winning long as we're keeping the points down, I'm not sure why, you know, I still love games that were 17-10, 17-14, you know, I'm not sure why everybody thinks a 50 to 40 is a good game. I'm a proponent that you play the game, you play the game a specific way, whatever way suits the game, that's how it should be played. There may be a game where we've got to score more than 17 points. I get that, but if you're in a game and it's a grind it out, rock 'em sock, then why would we want throw the ball 30, 40 times and expose the ball to something bad to happen? Again, the formula is working. It's kind of interesting too. You go back

and you look at the teams that have won the super bowl and look at how well they run the ball. That's kind of an uninteresting stat. You know what I'm saying? I just don't understand why people think more points is better football, because to me it's not. And I'm going on a line a little bit, but I think throwing the football really also kind of changed the way things are judged and looked at and, and referee and I don't think that's good for a football. I like the physical game. I like the physical nature of, of guys lining up and trying to move somebody and control the clock and grind it out. I mean, I'll tell you right now, I'll take a 10-minute drive day. I really would."

On S Bobby McCain's pass breakup at the end of the game:

"Yep. He was playing the ball. It's funny because there's a term that's used that's called hand fighting. I think that's one of the things that I talk about, the hand fighting now, the jostling for position. As long as you're not gaining a clear cut advantage, they're not gonna throw the flags. As long as you're playing the ball. When you look at Bobby, that's exactly what happened. There was a spectacular interception in the Chargers / Cincinnati game. When you slow it down, you see the defender actually hits the arm of the receiver before the ball gets there. But he is clearly playing the ball and makes a spectacular catch. It was one of those that the two guys went up and they both had a chance at it, but because he got in there and he hit that arm, he kept that other arm from coming in and clamping the ball and the defender was able to do it. There's some people that said, oh, that's pass interference. I said, no, look at the guy's eyes, look at where he's playing, he's playing to the ball. And so as long as you're playing to the ball and the referee sees it that way, you're not gonna get a penalty. I didn't think that there was an issue with that because Bobby was feeling for the receiver and trying to find the ball."

On the locker room culture:

"Scott, I think one of the really neat things that has happened is that the guys are feeding off each other's energy more so than anything else. And they're looking to each other to carry each other, bring each other together. And I think what's important. You do see the bonding, you do see it when those guys go out to dinner together. When we get to where we're staying, there's four guys, three guys, two guys, they're hanging out, they're developing the relationships that you need to go forward as a football team. That has been really cool to watch the growth. The locker room stuff, the stuff that we're doing as far as motivation. To me, we're just working off of a very simple theme, and that's really the challenges – the David versus Goliath challenges. It has kind of felt that way, obviously coming from two and six. It's something we continue to build on. I know the guys appreciate it. There's an excitement about it because of so many guys have had to step up and play. That's also the other thing because I think the teammates appreciate the way guys are preparing and getting ready to play, how they're holding each other accountable during practice. You see the defensive guys about running onto the field, running after the ball, finishing plays. You see the offensive guys, and, again, the offensive line as far as the obstacles are concerned is a great group and they push each other. The pass is thrown and they're covering down field, they're hustling back to the huddle, they're hustling to the line of scrimmage, ready to play. When one of the offensive guys make a play, how they all rally around each other. So those are the things that I think has really helped this growth of this team in terms of just maturing as a unit."

On if he is worried about how his team will handle the current success:

"No, because I remind them every week. I remind them it's a very simple thing. I believe it was Coach Wooden that said it. That talent is God given, be humble. Fame is man given, be wise. Ego is self given, be careful. So, I try to remind the guys every week, since we've been winning. Start talking about that...[inaudible]...lose your mind over this stuff. You have to take it one week at a time. I told the guys, 'Hey, let's enjoy this for 24 hours. We've got another hour before it's time to move on.' So once we get past it, now the focus will be obviously on Dallas."

On the team signing K Brian Johnson last week and Johnson hitting a game winning kick:

"The irony of it all was he was somebody that we were watching all along. We tried to get him to come to training camp and obviously he chose Chicago. Then when I was thinking about making the initial change, he gets scooped up by the Saints and we had made the change and we brought in another kicker. And then when [K] Joey [Slye] was available, we brought Joey in and then Joey gets hurt obviously. Brian was back in Chicago and so we plucked him off their practice squad and brought him here and gave him the opportunity. I met him for the first time in the hallway when he came to sign his contract and just told him, 'Appreciate you coming, Brian. Just know you got an opportunity, you got a chance and you got an opportunity to win a game for us.' And so he makes the kick and I went and congratulated him and said, 'Hey, great job. I knew you were gonna get your chance and you took advantage of it.' All smiles obviously. I kinda like what Taylor said was that not everybody knew who he was, but now they do. I think that's a big thing. That's a good thing for Brian and for us."