

# WASHINGTON

## FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER - LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

December 8, 2021

### Head Coach Ron Rivera

#### **On TE Logan Thomas:**

“Other than it was better than me expected. They’re gonna continue to keep an eye on it. I think they're gonna have one more doctor look at it. They feel pretty good about it. That's the best part. I don't know a lot of the details other than they're feeling good about it so far.”

#### **On DE Montez Sweat:**

“I can't tell you, just hearing the news this morning and then we had to put him on the protocol list and we'll go from there. Hopefully, we'll get some good news very shortly with that. So it's not a long one hopefully.”

#### **On LB Jamin Davis:**

“He reported symptoms to us after the game. And because of that, we had to put him in the protocol. We'll follow the rules that we go through.”

#### **On if he changed the practice schedule for the divisional games:**

“No. What we did was last week, we kind of went to what we typically do and that is everything we do now is to gear up towards the game. We're going through the mental aspects this first day, really trying to let the guys a little more time to recover, get their bodies back. But we still go out on the practice field, still go us through the practices. We're really emphasizing getting the game plan down mentally. Then we ramp it up. We'll pick up the pace and the tempo tomorrow. Then Friday, we want a fast Friday where it's all situational football.”

#### **On how his thinking has evolved with the divisional games approaching:**

“This is what we wanted to do. Without saying it, we wanted to win, put ourselves because at this point, now we control our own destiny. I mean how we go out and play, the things that we do gives us a chance. And that's again, like I've told you guys, that's all I want is that chance.”

#### **On Offensive Coordinator Scott Turner:**

“Well, pretty much when you watch as he designs the game plan, talking about how we want to attack certain aspects of the opponents coverages, stuff like that, how can we create the types of matchups that we want? You really see it with him and the other coaches when they're game planning, when they get together and they do their different segments of each part of the game plan in terms of everything from our first and second down stuff to our third down stuff to situational ball, red zone, stuff like that. They really talk about those things.”

#### **On if Sweat being put on the COVID list is frustrating:**

“Well, this time of year with the potential for the breakouts and all that, it's just frustrating period. It really is. It's just the unfortunate part. But we're okay. We're going to be fine like our guys. We're looking forward to Sunday.”

#### **On DT Jonathan Allen being nominated for the Walter Payton Man of the Year award:**

“Wow. Jonathan's an all-in kind of guy. Whatever he does, he's all into it. Whether it's football, being part of this football team, always out there in the community, working with the different aspects of the community service that he does. I do know one of the big things is that having come from a military family like I did, I see

his commitment to that. I did a couple things last year involved with the military and Jonathan was right there by my side. And it was really neat to just kind of see him get involved with those folks. Whether it is a service member or that service member's family or children, he's an incredible dude. I was fortunate enough to play with Walter [Payton] and he epitomizes Walter's spirit. He really does. It's kind of cool to watch him because when a guy goes and does something for the community, sometimes guys are there. When he's there, he's in. He kind of lets that shield down that, 'Hey, I'm a professional, Hey, I was one of you. I was a kid, I know what it was like being a military brat and going through that.' It's neat to see how he gets into things."

**On RB Antonio Gibson's workload:**

"I don't think it's too much. I think what's happened is you've watched him and he's geared himself up for each week and he's really kind of grasped that role. He's done a great job accepting the challenge. We try to be very smart with him, especially these next couple of days as we start ramping up for Sunday. He's the kind of guy that I think he gets stronger as he gets more opportunities."

**On this stretch of division games:**

"Yep. It really does because, again, as I said, we're in round-robin. You have that opportunity, you control it, so you've gotta go out and do your job. The big thing is, and I told you guys, we'll focus on them one at a time. That's the most important thing. Because again, if you start getting caught up and try to worry about that, you can't expect anything or can't expect anybody to do anything for you. You gotta go out and do it yourself. I've been fortunate, I've been in this situation a few times. I kind of know what it feels like. I have little bit of a grasp of what it's gonna take from our players."

**On QB Taylor Heinicke's improved game management:**

"Well, I think the thing that's helped us and I've said this, I think because we've fallen in love with the three and four yard runs. We've put ourselves in a better position on third downs. Somebody wrote real nice piece about that. I think you wrote it, talking about that. We've put ourselves in these third and short situations and because of that, we're converting more often and that helps us keep the ball. It helps us keep the clock going. And again, we just gotta continue to be good on first and second down and really appreciate what a three a yard run means to us."

**On the possibility of not putting Logan on IR:**

"I think that the thing you gotta be careful with is bringing a guy like him back too soon. You know, we've been fortunate and you're pushing and you're pushing and talking to the doctors, listened to the doctors for the most part. So far, we felt this was probably the best move for him going forward than it is anything else. And this really is about the players welfare going forward."

**On what changes in December:**

"That's kind of one of the neat things about it is that last year we went through this last year, we understand the guys that most of the guys that are playing, they know what it feels like. So this is nothing new that they don't know how to handle themselves. And hopefully the guys that are new to this, they can explain to 'em 'Hey guys, this is exactly what we've done. This is what we've been through. This is how we can, we can handle it.'"

**On how he approaches the divisional schedule with five straight:**

"No, you can't. I've done this a couple times and it's strange, but you know, when you start thinking ahead and thinking about what's next, it's like, well, you know, we might wanna save something and, I've been through those conversations and I've always felt that's a mistake. you know what I'm saying? Why split what you do well, so we're gonna do exactly what we need to do, and we're gonna go out and we're gonna focus on it. Doesn't matter that we're gonna play him, a week later, we're gonna focus in on playing that game."

**On why he decided to bring in a fourth running back over another tight end:**

“We have Wendell [Smallwood] on the list. He’s a little sore. So we had to be careful with it. We're just, we gotta cover ourselves. And Jonathan was the guy that was here. He was a guy that is well liked. Smart guy, understands the game. So having him would be good at the end of they day.”

**On WR Curtis Samuel:**

“We're managing with Curtis. This is about managing his workload more as anything else.”

**On CB William Jackson committing fewer penalties:**

”I think he's adapting and adjusting to how we do things. Remember this is a guy that came from primarily man coverage situation. He’s learning and getting a feel for playing with vision, you know, not with your back to the quarterback. I think he's adapted very nicely and we're starting to see it. I mean, he's got a skillset that's pretty good. And a guy like him, as they develop and do transition into to not just being a man guy, I think it's gonna create more opportunities for him because he's got a very good skillset. He's got good ball skills.”

**On past experiences at 2-6 that he was able to draw from to keep guys motivated:**

“I have a blind faith, I guess. I got a lot of confidence in our guys. I got a lot of confidence in our coaches and I just think that it's unfortunate, but we were most certainly better than what our record said. I know you are what your record said, but I didn't believe that. I do think that when guys believe in something and they really feel they have a chance and all they need is that opportunity. And that's what we are hoping to create. I mean, to get to where we are right now, with the opportunity with the door wide open. Now we just gotta step through it.”

**On if he thinks about ways to pump his team up like throwing a rock well in advance:**

“I think it all really evolved more so than anything else and fortunate enough for us, it was the, to me, it was the right team. I mean, I got so much respect for who Tom Brady is, and for Bruce Arians and what they accomplished last year. If you can get a victory off of a team like that and gain that momentum, we most certainly felt we had to get it going and I wanted to keep it going. What was really kind of cool was our reaction to it, the player's reaction to it. And I think we have something that we can rally around and believe in. As I go back to it, like I said, you know, for every question, there's an answer. Every problem, there's a solution, every Goliath, there's a David and every giant there’s a stone and that's kind of the significance of it. It was pretty significant this past weekend, you know, giving Jack [Del Rio] the opportunity to do that. And the players really loved that.”

**On TE John Bates:**

“I'll say this. I saw a young man really maturing, continuing to develop and grow into an NFL caliber tight end. He came in as a rookie and Coach Hoener and his style and his passion has really worked with this young man as he does with all our guys in really helping him to grow and develop. We saw it from Sammis as well. We saw it and Ricky Seals-Jones and now that, unfortunately we lose Logan, we got Ricky back in the fold and in the mix with those guys being part of what we do. As far as that group goes, it'll be the three of those guys. We're pretty much handle the duties. You know, we know what Ricky can do and what Ricky's skillset is. We know the strength of John's game as well. And Samims, you know, he continues to be a work in progress. He's done some really good things from the tape that we have on these guys. So we feel good and comfortable with these three guys.”

**On how to prevent a woe is me question:**

“Because it's about now, this is your opportunity. You're the next man up. And we talk about that and it's a stress to them. They understand that this is my chance. This is my challenge. They have to be ready to accept it. The thing that I don't want it to become is I don't want it to become an excuse. Now all of a sudden you say, ‘well, we got the excuse in place. So what the heck?’ No, it's not an excuse. You're a pro, you're professional.

You're paid just like everybody else. We expect you to give us your best. And we emphasize that to our guys and they believe that.”