

# WASHINGTON

## FOOTBALL TEAM, EST. 1932

INOVA SPORTS PERFORMANCE CENTER - LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA

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### **Head Coach Ron Rivera and General Manager Martin Mayhew**

#### **On evaluating quarterbacks:**

RR: “Well, I think first you start with your own evaluations and go from there. We've talked about some things today. In fact, we had a very good meeting earlier. And one of the things that we talked about again was, the four options we have on the roster in free agency, in the draft and potential trades. You gotta look at all avenues. Then you've gotta kind of predict and look at ones that intrigue you, and then go from there.”

#### **On if getting a young quarterback and veteran are out of the question:**

RR: “At this point. No, nothing's out of the question.”

MM: “I would just echo what coach said and tell you that we've started the process. We've been talking about this for several months now and how we move forward. Every avenue uncover every stone. We look at every situation out there and try to find the right guy.”

#### **On being aggressive in the Draft with the current roster:**

RR: “We feel very good about the roster. We do. We like the things that we've done. We like the guys that we have. We feel there are a couple spots that we most certainly do feel we need to upgrade. Just a few. And so again, putting ourselves in the right type of situation, I think is what we're doing.”

MM: “I would agree with that. Yeah, I would agree with that, selectively aggressive, making the right decision when to be aggressive, but certainly there'll come a time when there's time to do that.”

#### **On approaching the quarterback position with lesser Draft capital:**

MM: “Well, I would tell you this, uh, you know, having, having the number one pick is, you know, obviously helpful in that situation, but you still have to pick the right guy. You know, the year that we picked Stafford, Matthew Sanchez was out there, Mark Sanchez was out there. [Josh] Freeman was out there, there were other options. Options in free agency. We talked through a lot of different options in how to move forward before we decided to use that pick on Matthew and we had the opportunity to trade back. So we had the opportunity to trade back and maybe take one of those other guys and maybe Matthew would've still been there. Where you're picking isn't that important as you see every year, guys go 10, 11, elsewhere, other than the first overall pick being pretty good quarterbacks.”

RR: “I don't disagree. To me, it's not just about where you pick, but who you pick and that's just as important. So again, as we go through this process, we're gonna evaluate, and we're gonna look at our options”

#### **On if the roster this year is in a better position compared to last year:**

RR: “I believe it is. I'm optimistic about us. I think we've got some good football players in the right positions and as we go forward, the decision we make, will be based on what we believe is best for us.”

#### **On potential staffing changes:**

RR: “Yeah. I mean, again, it's something I'm not gonna talk about.”

**On meeting with ownership about the season:**

RR: "I most certainly do cuz again, one of the things that you always do is you, to me, you always prepare a review. You speak about your players, speak about your staff, speak about the season and then speak about the plan going forward. That's really what I anticipate doing with the ownership. At the end of the day, it's their football team. They have the right to know and understand where we are, what happened and what we intend to do to keep things going in the right direction."

**On if he has spoken with Dan and Tanya Snyder yet:**

RR: "No, again, this is about again, going through the process of evaluations right now for us and at the appropriate time I will visit with them."

**On what he has learned since leading the football operation:**

RR: "Well, first thing you appreciate is the work that our personnel department does. They do a lot of work. Martin, his crew has been tremendous, especially in light of the COVID situation we went through. One of the things that you can really truly point to and applaud them on was helping us with the depth of that offensive line. Being able to protect the quarterback, being able to run the football I think is very important. We were able to continue to do that and do it well. I mean, when you finish the season and you see that your group is ranked in the top 10, considering we played with a fourth center at one time, we used a fifth guard, I think it was a fourth tackle. You say that that's a pretty good job. Just knowing that the personnel department has done that type of work for us in terms of helping to set the table. I think that's something that you really get fond appreciation for. If you have to try and do all those types of things by yourself, it's not gonna get done. That's probably the biggest thing, you know, that, that I, I really do appreciate."

**On if the rookie quarterback option is less appealing knowing he is going into year 3:**

RR: "As we go through the process, if we believe that's the best option absolutely. You know, but again, we're gonna do what we believe is best for the football team going forward and whether it is a rookie quarterback or free agent quarterback or quarterback on the roster or trade. Yeah. We're gonna look at everything and then make the decision."

**On evaluating his first year as General Manager:**

MM: "It was my first year here. It was also a Marty [Hurney]'s first year here. Eric [Stokes] was very instrumental in everything that we did, Eric Stokes, Chris [Polian]. So we've got a great group that's working together to make these things happen. But in terms of starting the process, getting here, we jumped right in. As far as evaluating our team, evaluating other players in free agency and the draft, the first couple here, that's all that we did as a staff. I think we grew a lot through that process, got to know each other quite a bit. And I think we're working really well together right now."

**On how Ron Rivera thinks the front office team performed in year 1:**

RR: "I thought they were, like I said, I really appreciate their efforts and what they did. I felt good about the fact that as we went through this season and we endured the situations we had, we were able to field a good team, you know, competitive team, a group of guys that went out and played hard to the end. I mean, some things you just can't foresee. But for the most part, being able to stay competitive, I think was an important thing for us so I really appreciate what they did."

**On the offensive line:**

RR: "I think it's solid. I really do. I think it's very sound. It probably could, in light of a lot of things that happen. As I said, playing with the guys that basically were your fourth option, you feel pretty good about it. I

don't think it would be just them alone. I think the running backs will have something to say about it. I think tied in is a position to that. That can be very good for us if we're healthy. It's really about the unit and the team itself. If we are doing some good things, if we're running the ball well and everybody's doing their job. By that I mean, not just the offensive line, blocking people. The tight end involved with it, the wide receivers blocking down field, running it, we could run it very effectively. One of the things that we noticed and one things that I had our analytics guy look at was during that four game stretch from Tampa to Seattle or to Vegas those four wins. The thing that was most impressive to me that stood out the most was we ran the ball six more times a game than we normally do on average. And during that period, we obviously gained more yards. We had shorter third down situations. And when you watched those tapes and you watched some of those runs, it was exactly that it wasn't just the offensive line moving people outta the way. It was the tight ends involved in the running game. It was the wide receivers blocking, but it was the runners. And so that made things better for us. So if we can have the guys that we have and get those guys back and get those guys going again and continue to watch Antonio [Gibson], get a healthy JD [McKissic] out there and really, you know, keep things rolling, we have a very good chance. I like our guys. I do. And I think it could not just them, but just the, the fact that playing a physical brand of football speaks well to what we can be speaks more volume cause it helps take a lot of pressure off the quarterback having to do things. Takes a lot of pressure off the defense, cuz it keeps 'em off the field. I mean, if you figure six plays is gonna average about two and a half minutes, six running plays that's two and a half less minutes that the other opponents offense will be out there and your defense will be on the bench resting.”

**On naming a new head athletic trainer:**

RR: “No, that's a fair question because we most certainly are looking at those options right there, those are things that we have to consider going forward. It's been a very difficult situation. We hired Greg Smith, who obviously worked at one point for the [NHL Washington] Capitals and did a great job coming in to help us, but you know, that was a temporary thing. We brought in a couple of interns that had worked with us to help add some more bodies to it and it worked effectively. Was it ideal? No. But going forward, we will certainly have to look at that and we will, and we'll address it because again, we'll have the combine coming up very shortly and we're going to have to have evaluations go through all of that process. So, we'll see what's in store for us, but it is most certainly something that we are working towards.”

**On G Brandon Scherff:**

MM: “Yeah. Well Brandon is an outstanding player. Seven years here, five Pro-Bowls. I mean, you can't replace that kind of production. Very respected in the locker room and it's been great getting to know him. It's my first year here being around him and seeing his work ethic. But I think our fans should know, we've made every effort to get something done. We've continued to work on that. Last year we made an offer to be the highest paid offensive guard in the history of the National Football League. and we'll keep that dialogue going on and see where things go.”

**On his message to the team yesterday:**

RR: “It was really about going forward. Once February 2nd comes and everybody knows what happens [February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022] is that we most certainly are going to go forward. I don't want to get pulled backwards. This is a chance for us to step beyond the shadow of what we've had to deal with and really start fresh, start new, it'll be an opportunity. We obviously are changing our name, we'll have our name out there, but what we're also doing is new uniforms which are pretty cool. I think you guys are going to appreciate them, I think the fans will appreciate them. And it really is to me, an opportunity, it's been difficult, but at the same time, it's an opportunity to go forward and that's what I want. I want us to be able to step into a new light and create a new opportunity for our guys as a football team to go forward.”

**On the defensive line play this season:**

RR: “Well, initially I think if you want to talk about pure football, I think the one thing was expectations. Everybody's expectations across the board players included mine, coaches, fans everybody was probably a little bit out of whack. I think one of the biggest things that we tried to do was we tried to show what we were capable of and who we are instead of trying to just go out and play football the way we were supposed to. I thought guys, and I talked about this, was that there was some things that we were doing when we weren't supposed to do, we were popping gaps when we were trying to make plays instead of staying home and just knowing the play doesn't care who makes it. If you were supposed to be, you make your play and that's probably the biggest thing early on. And I think as a season wore on, as we started to lose is that was a little bit difficult. But, you know, we had a nice stretch again, where as a team we played the way you're supposed to. There were a lot of good things that were happening. We were effective as an offense running the ball and we were effective as a defense getting after the quarterback and probably the biggest thing when you look at statistics was our third down production during that stretch. When we were good on third down on both sides of the ball, we were very effective. When we weren't good on third downs on both sides of the ball we struggled. And that's one of the things that when you do look at the numbers, the analytics that stood out that truly stood out was the third down efficiency is something we got to get better at. And that can be helped by how you play your first and second downs as well.”

**On if all the players and coaches are on the same page:**

RR: “Yeah I do, because when you look at what happens and what can't happen, everything starts up front first and foremost. If we're playing downhill and into our gaps and we're doing the things that we're supposed to, there's really no place to run. I know Sunday was a little different kind of game, but that game was emblematic of us. Being able to slow them down and shut the run down. And there were a couple plays that stood out where they bounced it outside and picked up a nice run, eight yards or nine yards, whatever it was. And a big part of it was because the linebacker didn't flow and get outside like he was supposed to. Another time it was the end was supposed to set the edge and he fell back inside. I mean, that's probably the biggest thing more than anything else. And it's sometimes it's never just one guy, and that's the thing that's tough, is if it's one guy it's easy, because you replace him. If it's a mixture, you know, one guy here, one guy here that's a little different, that's a little difficult to work on.”

**On if there will be as many quarterbacks changing teams as expected:**

RR: “That's tough to say. I mean we're going to look at everything to be honest. But the thing that we don't know is who will be available. You're going to have to look at it and if you have any inkling or thought, you're going to go through in your mind, go through the process and you know, and see if that's a viable entity, you know, a viable option. So we'll see.”

**On how spending money on a quarterback affects the rest of the team:**

MM: “Those are all key decisions and they're all tied together. And one decision leads to another one. So, we have to weigh all of that in so as coach mentioned, there are four different avenues we have to go through in terms of looking at which quarterback is the best one for us, but we also have to look at how that affects the rest of the team.”

**On how he related year 3 with the Carolina Panthers to year 3 here:**

RR: “Well, the big difference being in Carolina, when I got there, the attitude was, if we're going to take a quarterback early, we had to make sure the offensive line could protect him. And we had enough playmakers around him. And we were very fortunate with the playmakers to begin with. When you have [Former Panthers

WR] Steve Smith and [Former Panthers RB's] DeAngelo Williams, Jonathan Stewart is a tandem running backs and [Former Panthers TE's] Greg Olson and Jeremy Shockey tight end. Now the question is, do you have enough guys up front? And when we did, we had an all pro at left tackle. We had Ryan Kalil at Center, you know, we had [Former Panthers Guard and Current Assistant Offensive Line Coach] Travelle Wharton at guard and guys that had played a lot. So, we were able to protect him and long and behold that year he becomes NFL rookie to year and broke all the rookie passing records that Peyton Manning had set at one time. So, having that, you felt pretty good about playing a rookie. I feel we have a pretty good nucleus right here that if we did do that with a rookie, I wouldn't be afraid to play him because you're bringing them here for one reason, that's to play. If you draft him, are you guys going to be patient enough to give me two seasons? Are you guys going to be patient enough if I don't play him? So, if we do that, we're doing that to play him. I'm not doing it to have him wait, because again, it is about, like I said, to me, the third season is when you take another step and hopefully, we've done the things with the other positions that would warrant us, finding the guy to put in and get ready to roll whether it comes from one of those four avenues or not. That's the important thing that we have to decide on."

**On having two seasons under .500:**

RR: "We did win a division though. Understand that winning is winning. I won't apologize for the record. I think it'll be appropriate. When I need to be patient, I'll be patient. When I need to get on them, I need to get on them. I mean, I can't tell you what it's going to be, because I know what my expectations are."

**On QB Deshaun Watson:**

RR: "We can't talk about players and other rosters just to be fair. But we're going to explore all avenues."

**On handling character concerns with players:**

RR: "Well, then we most certainly will do our due diligence if that's the case. That's the thing that we have to do more so than anything else is really take a look at all those situations, circumstances and really kind of go through the process. Obviously, we'd have to find out what the League has going on and saying with things and situations like that. It'd be no different than any other position that we've gone with. We'll go through a very diligent process. I know Martin and his group will certainly do that because when it does come to it, these are the guys that really handle the investigations for us."

**On if signing a player like Watson would be risky for the organization:**

RR: "I don't know because, again, you gotta understand what the circumstances are. To look at certain situations, certain circumstances, you'd like to hope that your culture inside is strong enough to put their arm around people and help them get things going in the right direction too. So we'll see. Again, it's every avenue guys. We'll cross those bridge as we get to."

**On if there is more urgency for a young quarterback to start:**

RR: "Oh yeah. I said this probably I think about a month ago or something like that, but the urgency to play first rounders period and even second rounders and third rounders has changed from when I played, from when Martin played. Guys that got picked in the first round back in the day, you sat, you didn't necessarily play. There was a great player that played here that I was drafted with in Chicago, Wilber Marshall. Wilber came in and all through OTAs or we didn't have OTAs back then. All through minicamp and training camp, his nickname was phenom. He was unbelievable. But he didn't start because there was no need or no pressure to start him. He didn't get his opportunity to play until the Super Bowl year, and then he became a full-time starter and then obviously ends up here. So that urgency has changed. Now when you take guys in the first round, the urgency is to get them on the field because there's other ramifications and implications involved. That's got a lot

to do with the with the salary cap first of all. Because when you draft guys, you gotta play them because you've gotta take some pressure off of that. Then I think expectations have gone way through the roof for whatever reason. I think that's also part of why you see so many guys not have as much success as they used to in the past because they're not getting the initial formal training that we used to get. Back then it was you were taught, you were trained and then you played. Now, the guys get drafted and they're thrown right into the mix of things and the expectations go crazy. Are those fair? I don't know. Back then, they weren't fair. Today, they might be different and it's a completely different game also. That's the other thing. That's one of the things that I struggle with and I know how people feel about our first round pick this past season [LB Jamin Davis]. I don't think those are fair. He's a young man that, again, if you look at where he came from, he had one full year as a starter. So this was his second year as a starter getting opportunities to compete and play and went out there and did the best he could. We had to learn him and understand him. You guys heard what I've said the last couple weeks is that with a true MIKE in there with David Mayo playing that position, not only did you see him play well, but you saw Cole [Holcomb] play even better. That to me is exciting. We learned something. Again, losing Jon Bostic when we did really stood out and it showed us just how important the group is. I get it and I'll get criticized for saying what I just said, but that's okay. That's how I feel. I feel that if we could all settle down with the expectations and just give people opportunities, we may get surprised.”

#### **On being patient with Draft picks:**

RR: “That's a great, Nicki. Because it's tough because I get it. This area is hungry for a winner. They wanna winner and I wanna win. I want this. That's why we played Sunday to win, to show these folks that we care about winning, show these folks these guys are gonna show up and play hard. They're not gonna take a dive. They had something to play for. They had two guys do something that was pretty special, rush for a thousand yards and be a thousand-yard receiver. I mean that's pretty dog on good. Just wanting to make sure that they understand that we're trying to do the best we can and we'll continue to fight and compete because to me that's important. It really is because this fan base – I've alluded to it and Martin can tell you because he was here, he knows what it's like. We know what it's like when these guys are successful on the football field, they'll come out in droves. That's why the hard part is to balance, define where that fine line is of putting guys out there and quote throwing them to the wolves.”

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

RR: “I think what it did for us in terms of that was getting a better feel, understanding for what we think he really can become and that is he can be an edge guy for us. He can be an inside/outside linebacker. I'm trying to get it straight with the 3-4 and the 4-3. In the 4-3, he could be an outside linebacker. He can be a guy that can go out in space and run. We see his ability to run and run through contact. He could run with running backs. He could run with tight ends. He's a run through contact guy that can learn to get downhill and take those double teams off and help his D-line up front. I think that is where he belongs right now. Will he become an inside middle guy? There's a chance still. I was pretty excited to watch him come in that situation and not have to worry about trying to control or command anything as far as playing the position. I'm excited. I really am about him and potentially if we can find the right inside guy, whether it be David [Mayo] or Jon [Bostic] or somebody else to work with those young guys as they develop.”

#### **On the linebacker scouting process:**

RR: “I will say this and I talked about that. I love that question as well because going through the process, the one thing that you really didn't get to do this time was really get to meet them. It's one thing to do it on Zoom, but being up front and really be able to communicate with them, watch them in-person, their body language, ask the tough questions about: ‘Hey, why don't we talk about this coverage? Why don't we talk about how to draw this front up for me and explain this?’ Really get into the details. I think that's one of the hard parts with the way

the process is to really get a true feeling. I hope we get to do those things in-person. I hope we get to be in the same room and talk because one of the things that we do and we've done it in the past was when we bring a prospect in, we sit them down and we have tape from when they played and we have them explain that to us in detail. If we have to, we have them draw stuff up for us. We ask them questions, we show them diagrams, 'Hey, can you go ahead and show this from memory?' There's a whole process that really you don't get a true feel for when you're not here interacting. That to me is an important part. Hopefully we can get back to that as well."

**On WR Terry McLaurin:**

RR: "You guys are killing me. His agent is going to read your articles. He's going to listen to what I say. Terry is somebody that we most certainly do want to make sure we get something worked out going forward. We want to do it the right way. Those are things that are obviously in discussions with us right now as we start preparing for the offseason."

**On adding speed:**

MM: "I think those things are always important in this league, especially with the game the way it's being played now, speed's gonna be really important going forward and you always wanna get younger and healthier and faster. So, that's not gonna change for us going forward."

**On what he is doing differently here than when he was in Carolina:**

RR: "Well, one of the really good things that I really do appreciate and being able to do is really kind of the personnel department, the way we have it structured right now, I really do appreciate that. It's a collaborative effort and as I said earlier, one thing that I really thought worked very well for us was really just the way these guys set the table. I think that that's different from my initial experience. Pretty much a lot of things we've done pretty similar to and the biggest difference obviously is not having the clear cut franchise quarterback yet. The one thing that we have done though, is I think we've got a lot of pieces in place. There's a couple more that, in fact, we met today with [General Manager] Martin [Mayhew], [Executive Vice President of Football/Player Personnel] Marty [Hurney], [Senior Director of Player Personnel] Eric [Stokes], and myself and the coordinators have met and kind of went through the personnel initially. We talked about what we feel our biggest needs are to kind of put them kind of on notice as to what to be looking for at these All-Star games because these guys will be breaking pretty soon and they'll head out to all the All-Star games. They'll start their evaluation process with us and also give them a heads up as we start getting a little bit later in a couple weeks as we start preparing for free agency as to the positions that we're looking for special emphasis in. That's a little bit different, but at the same time just trying to make sure that we're all on the same page. That Martin and his guys know what we're looking for, not just the position, but in the player and then the person, how important that quote unquote fit is to us."

**On the receivers:**

RR: "Well, I do think again that [WR] Dyami [Brown] with that speed and what we saw in the potential in the last few weeks is important. But the other guy too that kind of got a little lost in the shuffle, but had an opportunity to show again was [WR] Cam Sims as a young man that we gotta look at and figure out just to make sure. But, depending on what happens in free agency, if we lose a couple guys, yeah we'd have to bring another guy in as well. So we'll see what happens as far as that position goes. But, it is a position we do like. We think it's a good position led by [WR] Terry [McLaurin]. It does impact the rest of the offense because again, getting [TE] Logan [Thomas] back out there and again, we can get [WR] Curtis [Samuel] back on the football field because again, think about what he did in 2020. He was the most productive player per touch when he was in Carolina. He's a guy that we had drafted, I had drafted when I was there, got a chance to watch him grow and develop and saw how explosive he was for us and we know what his abilities are. Hopefully we

can get him back here and healthy and ready to roll for us next season and it'll help open things up. It'll take a lot of pressure off a lot of people as well."

**On adding a veteran linebacker at the MIKE position:**

RR: "Well, I think again in that group it's important to have the right guy there. As we evaluate the process, that's one thing we're gonna look for is make sure we have the right guy there."

**On what he takes from missing on free agent signings the past two offseasons:**

RR: "Well, I think the biggest thing is obviously now knowing that again, we feel comfortable with our pieces in place. If you're gonna make any kind of move, then you've gotta make sure you understand what type of capital you're gonna have to use. There's a lot of things you have to consider. You have to consider draft picks obviously, and then you have to consider current players. So, there's a lot of things that will go into these decisions. If there's something out there, somebody out there that we like enough to sit down and say, 'Hey, look we have to consider these picks and that capital in terms of core players.' We'll have to talk about that stuff, but we're not gonna pull the trigger without really knowing the implications yet."

**On if getting the right quarterback makes the entire roster better:**

RR: "Yeah. I think if we're fortunate enough to find that guy, identify that guy and have that guy on our football team then yes. I think our personnel is more than good enough. Again, I'm optimistic. I believe in our team. I believe in what we can be. Yes, it does. I'll point to the fact that our first season here when we moved some people around and [former Washington QB] Alex Smith came in and we really saw that development and growth. That to me is what a good quarterback can do for you is he elevates the play of the people around him. He manages the games, he distributes the ball and when needed, makes plays. That's what you look for. That's what you gotta have. To your question, that's exactly what he does."

MM: "That's the perfect answer. I mean as we talked about, quarterback is the most important position on the field. He is gonna elevate the other players around him, and having a good quarterback helps your defense as well. So, that's gonna be a key decision. It's something we've been talking about for months now and we will get it done."

RR: "And to your question earlier about the offensive line, that to me is hand-in-hand. Because again, if you're running the ball successfully, you're also taking pressure off of him. Now the play-action pass means a little bit more. The drop back passing there's a little bit more time because there's a little bit more hesitancy up front. So, this being the ultimate team game, that's the impact of all that together."

