

July 30, 2022

Ryan Kerrigan Retirement Press Conference

On how hard of a decision it was to retire:

"Very. Even though I know it's the right decision ultimately, it's still not easy to know that I'm not gonna play football anymore. Like I kind of had that realization the other night, before I think that would be Thursday night, I guess. I was talking to my wife, like 'Damn, I'm not gonna play football anymore.' That's kind of crazy. Been doing it for so long, but I just know where I'm at health wise and what not that this is the best thing for me moving forward."

On when he reached the decision that he was going to retire:

"So I actually came to that decision in the offseason of 2021. So, like spring of 2021 going into last season when I was a free agent, got a not so good medical report from a couple different doctors about my knee. But, at that time, actually was kind of encouraged to not play the 2021 season. But I wasn't emotionally ready to not play football anymore at that point. So I was like, I'm still gonna play. I still think I can. And so that was the plan all along. But then I have a good playoff game and finish out last season that kind of made me feel like, 'Oh, maybe I can still do this and whatnot.' And then as I got into training again this summer, like kinda late in June the knee really started bothering me again. And I just was like, you know what? You got a long, long life to live Lord willing and gotta not play anymore. So I kind of came to it late June."

On some of his best memories here that he has reflected on over the last couple days:

"A lot of fun game memories, like when we beat Dallas in 2012 to win the division here. In 2018, when we beat Dallas at home and I got the forced fumble and [former Washington DE] Preston Smith picked it up for a touchdown. Getting a pick six my first game. That was awesome. But it's when I come back here to [The] Park that I really am like, that's why I've loved this place. Because it's all the relationships you built over the years with teammates, coaches, the people in the kitchen, the strength staff, you guys. I mean, I've developed a lot of great relationships with you guys and I've got to know you guys a little bit outside of your jobs here. And so it's those that really have made this such a special thing and a big reason why it's hard. Even that it's hard to walk away, even though I know it's the right thing."

On if he got emotional when he walked into the building yesterday:

"Definitely. That was really cool. What Coach Rivera and them did yesterday, coming out and applauding me when I walked in, it was way more than I thought it would be. I kind of thought I was just gonna come in and sign a couple pieces of paper, take a couple pictures, do a couple interviews and be on my way. But you know, they really just made me feel so welcome. To see all my D-line guys standing there and applauding me when I walked in, it meant a lot. And it was really -- I was at a loss for words. I mean, I kinda looked at my wife. I'm like, 'Damn, what do I do now? Like everyone's here now [laughs].' So it was cool. It was a really special moment."

On what went into the decision to sign a one-day contract and retire as a member of the Washington Commanders:

"Yeah, it was something that I felt strongly about and this is where my heart is. This is where I started. This

is where, unfortunately I wasn't able to finish, but yesterday was great. Like I said, they went above and beyond to make it a special day for me. And we'll remember that day for the rest of our lives."

On if he thinks he'd still be playing if it wasn't for the knee issues:

"I do. Yeah. And that's what kind of makes it tough because it's complicated because I still feel like I can, but like not knowing that that's not a guarantee. That it's not a guarantee that I would get a roster spot at the end of camp, because that was kind of my plan this offseason was to kind of just wait throughout training camp and once rosters start to shake out, hopefully find a good situation. But without that guarantee to continue to put more stress on my knee and whatnot, it just wasn't worth it. And so I had to make a tough decision and I remember the day I made the decision, I slept really well that night. And so I was like, 'Okay, maybe look for signs and things. Maybe that's it. Maybe that's the universe telling me that yeah, you're doing the right thing. You gotta move on.'"

On what it meant to him that DE Chase Young was one of the first players to greet him:

"It means a lot. I mean, I was only with Chase one year and only with Coach Rivera and his staff for one year. But for them to receive me like that yesterday made me feel really appreciated and made me feel like, 'Okay, like it was a short time, but it was an impactful and meaningful time.' That meant a lot."

On his thoughts on coming back to the Park but seeing it rebranded with the new name:

"It's exciting. It's a new era of football here in Washington and I'm hoping that means a lot of wins in the future. Some playoff wins, something I unfortunately didn't get to experience here or even last year in Philly. But, I'm just hoping that means good things for the team moving forward, and good things for the guys in the locker room."

On how he prepared himself emotionally to walk into the building:

"I mean, I had a long time because like I'd said, the reports I got were in, I guess that would be May of 2021, so more than a year ago. So like I kind of knew that last season was gonna be my last season. I kind of told myself like, 'Okay, you're not playing beyond this. You probably shouldn't be playing now, but we're gonna give it one more shot, just because you're not ready. You're not emotionally ready.' And so I knew I wasn't gonna be playing this season. To not be playing this season was the plan all along and I'm glad I came to the decision when I did because I know that it's the right thing. I had a long time to prepare. There was a couple detours in getting there, just like I said, like playing well in the last game. You know, if I get a little bit of consistent run, like I can -- yeah, a couple detours along the way with playing well in the last game, took a couple months off after the season and I'm like, 'Oh, my body feels nice. I can do this again.' Then it's like, 'Well, your body feels nice because you haven't trained for football in two months.' So I kind of acknowledged the truth there. But yeah. I've had time to prepare for it, even though the ultimate decision wasn't made until late last month."

On what it means to be one of the last great Redskins:

"It's really cool. I know this team means a lot to a lot of people and it's one of the older franchises in the league and had a lot of great players come through. And so for people to think of me that way, it's pretty damn cool."

On reflecting on all the work it took to play in the NFL at a high level for 11 years:

"I mean, I definitely look on that with pride. I wanted to be available and I think that's one of the things I found out along the way is that being available doesn't necessarily mean healthy. Which I think is one of the reasons why my knee is the way it is today. But, you make the decisions you make and you live with the results. But it meant a lot to me and I think that me being out there for 139 straight games or whatever and

being ready to play, I think that was a testament to how I felt about the game and how I felt about my approach to it."

On what he's looking forward to being able to do with his family now that football is over:

"I mean, I think more than anything, I feel a sense of relief. Like knowing that like it's July and Saturday morning, I don't gotta go hit anybody. I don't got [former Washington T] Morgan Moses staring at me getting ready to try to take my head off. That's pretty nice. I wanna stay in football, so I'm excited to find out where football is gonna take me next. Coaching is something I want to explore because I just feel like I love the environment too much. I love the football building environment. I love being around the guys too much. And I love being able to impart some of the things I've learned over the past 11 years on people. That's been one of the cooler things the past two years is that being an elder statesmen, guys wanna learn. They come up and they're like, 'Hey, what do you see here? What do you see here? What do you do to help you with this?' And it's been cool to be able to pass that on to guys. And so that's something I wanna explore further. I wanna stay in football in some capacity. I think coaching would be a good route."

On what about himself does he think made him such a good role model for other players:

"Well, that means a lot to me to hear guys say that stuff. One of the things that meant a lot to me was I tried to take a consistent approach everyday. Whether it was Week One, Week 17, whether we were, 3-0 or 0-3, like I tried to be the same guy. And I think that's ultimately what can allow you to succeed in the NFL is if you have a consistent approach and you stick with it, even when it's not convenient. I hope guys saw me do that and I hope that was something that can benefit a lot of guys."

On what the self-assessment in the offseason is like for a top player:

"Yeah. It's definitely a lot. I noticed that the better I felt I played in the previous season, I felt like that would like push me harder the next offseason. Like kind of like the reverse of what you would think. Like you'd kind of think like if you played well, I'd be like, 'Oh, I'm taking an extra week or day off here.' And for me it was like the better I played, the harder I worked because I saw the hard work paying off. And so I was like, 'Okay, well, if that worked, I'm gonna double down on that and try to get even more out of it.' I think that that mentality served me well."

On if he ever had a season where the public perception was positive but he personally felt he didn't perform well:

"That's a good one. That's a tough one. I mean, there's definitely plays throughout a season where that's the case. Where it's like, 'Oh, he got a sack, but maybe his technique or form wasn't great.' You know, where I would say, 'Okay, well I got the sack, but I can do this better to ensure that if something else happens, I'm ready for that.' But yeah, no, I mean, not particularly, no."

On how weird it was to play for the Philadelphia Eagles and on how emotional it was to return to FedExField last season:

"It wasn't strange at first surprisingly signing with Philly because I really tried to take like an objective approach to free agency. Where I was like, 'Okay, where do I feel is gonna be best for me?' Like, take all the emotional factors out, take divisional factors out. And where do you think is gonna be best for you? And so it wasn't weird in that sense. But I will say when I saw like the number 90 jersey. It was just different. I'll say that. But yeah, definitely coming back to FedExField, it was awesome. That was actually the biggest perk of being an Eagle was like, 'Okay, I get to play in front of fans at FedExField one more time. Because my last game at FedExField in Washington was the playoff game and there was nobody there. And so that was a little silver lining of signing with Philly was getting to play in front of my people here at FedExField one more time. So that was awesome.'"

On the new name:

"I like it. I love the helmets too. Initially with the jerseys I was like, oh, those look alright. But then I saw 'em in person just a little bit ago. I was like these are pretty sick. I like these."

On what he wants people to remember about him:

"I just want them to know that I gave them everything I had, like literally everything I had. Emotionally, physically, they got all of me like football wise. Football was my life. I didn't have a lot of hobbies. I played a little bit of golf in the off season. I got a wife and three daughters. Other than that, it was all about football. It was, how's this daily decision gonna help me with football? I'm waking up in the morning, I'm eating breakfast. Okay. How's this breakfast gonna help me with football? That's how I approached every day of my football career. I just want fans to know that it meant that much to me. That my performance and what I was showing on Sundays was it was that important to me. It was my driving force in life."

On his last game with Washington at FedExField:

"Yeah, it was definitely emotional. I kind of had a feeling that it was gonna be my last one there. I just kinda wanted to take it in a little bit and just kind of be by myself a little bit out there. It was emotional. I've had such joy here. I've had such joy at FedExField throughout my life and throughout my career and I mean, hell my wife and I got engagement photos taken at FedExField. That place means a lot to me and it always will. It was definitely an emotional time."

On the freedom of not having to put everything into football:

It's very freeing. Like I was talking yesterday, and I've talked to my wife about this recently. My diet has always been, I felt like an edge to me. It was something like I always have believed in the effect of your fuel and your food on your performance. It's good because it served me well, but it was also very consuming. It's like oh gosh, like I don't have access to grilled chicken and rice. Like if you're traveling, what am I gonna do? That emotional burden is nice to be able to kick cuz like being a guy that played on the line of scrimmage, you gotta kind of force feed yourself a lot of times to keep on your weight and whatnot. So to now be able to just eat when I'm hungry, not eat when I'm not hungry. Like it's kind of, it's kind of nice. I want a beer; I have a beer. That's a little bit emotionally freeing because I mean my wife would even get like kind of annoyed sometimes like dude it's Friday night in the offseason. Like it's Friday night in late February, can't we go eat something fun? But now that's the biggest thing that I'm excited just to have more just freedom.

On watching games from the other side:

"I don't think it will be. I've had the NFL Network on most days here and I watched training camp from all around the league. I haven't had a feeling yet of like, oh man, I'm really wanting to be out there. Whereas when I thought in the spring of '21, when was a free agent and I got a bad medical report and thought I was gonna have to retire, I remember watching the draft and that was a big trigger for me. I was like, oh my gosh. Like, I'm not ready to retire and whatnot, and so that feeling now is not here. Like I watch football and I'm just like, oh cool. I wanna see what's going on. See what's happening with these guys."

On what hobbies he may want to pick up:

"I mean, we got three under three with kids right now so there are hobbies. There are hobbies right now. They're all over the place, so I'll pick up some hobbies maybe when they get a little older. Maybe get on the golf course a little more."

On if he ever thought he would play with Washington again:

"Definitely that would've been cool, but at the same time, I think I knew in the back of my mind that even

when I was wishy washy about whether I wanted to play or not, I just kind of knew that I wasn't gonna play. It would've been awesome to come back here and maybe have some closure, but at the same time, yesterday was plenty of great closure. I knew where the road was leading and took a couple detours, but I'm here now."

On if he plans to stay in football near-term:

"Yeah, definitely in the near term. I'm a worker. I like to be busy. I like to work. I've been at home for like five weeks now when I made the decision. I think those four are ready for me to be outta the house a little bit. Yeah. I definitely want to get to something. I love football too much. I just love football too much to not be involved in it in any capacity. And so that's, that's what I'm, I'm hoping to do.

On if college is possible:

"Yeah, I mean college would be cool. I think that would probably be the most satisfying age group to coach because it's like, okay, they're here so they got a great skillset but there is still room to grow. That would be fun, but I mean being in the NFL I think would be ideal."

"I just wanna thank you guys. I developed a lot of great relationships with a lot of you guys over the years and I'm bummed that our last season together in the COVID year, we didn't get the same kind of banter in the locker room and whatnot. John, I didn't get to talk about Ohio State with you, they're looking good by the way. You guys were always great to me and I've really enjoyed our relationships and friendships over the years. So, thank you guys. Thank you."