

August 4, 2022

Head Coach Ron Rivera

On what he thinks was missing from the defensive line last year aside from injuries:

"I think probably just cause the consistency of what we were doing. You know, it is one of those things too, and we can't forget that coverage and rush all go hand in hand. If one element of it is really being successful, it'll help the other, the other. And so we've just gotta be consistent, you know, in all the phases of our defense, whether it's pass rush underneath coverage or over the top coverage."

On what he has seen from DE James Smith-Williams and DE Casey Toohill:

"James is more of a six technique type player. He's got a good body, good physical style player. He's gonna get a little bit more push, more so than he's gonna get more of the finesse on the outside on the edge. Casey has been a true physical try-hard guy that gets up field use relies on his initial quickness, and then goes from there. Efe Obada is a very by the numbers guy. I mean, he's learned the game. He's still learning the game to be honest with you, but he's got some good natural skill sets that really fit well for a pass rusher. He's just gotta learn to continue to develop who he is as a pass rusher. {William] Bradley-King, he's been very interested to watch he's done some really good things. He's got a little bit to him. He's got heavy hands. He does a nice job on the edge. If he can get his pad level down, I think he'll win even, even more. Probably the guy that gives you a little bit something that's a situational pass rusher is Shakka Tony. He's a guy that's got great anticipation gets off the ball, has a nice dip and can lean and make that turn on the edge. He's a guy that's intriguing for us, a guy that we're watching and paying attention to. So, just really like what he's bringing to the table."

On if he felt the decision to keep the youth of the defensive line paid off:

"Yeah, I do because I think they've had to play a lot. That's one of the nice things about when you're able to keep giving young guys opportunities and putting them out there is that they're gonna play. If you look at the transition that this roster's gone through in terms of the age, you notice it's a young group of guys, but those guys have played a lot of football already and so they're learning how to play the game because they've been on the field and exposed to being on the field. As I talked about last year, my big concern last year was just maturity. I think we're where we need to be in the sense of that, now it's just continuing to grow and develop."

On what he has seen from TE Cole Turner in terms of blocking and where he can improve:

"I think understanding, you know, what it means for him when we talk about leverage, knowing that, 'Hey, the runner's going this way. I gotta make sure I'm positioned in this spot.' It's when he's coming around an edge that the tighter, I say to the offensive line, the better angle I'm gonna create for myself. Understanding those angles to cut guys off with. Hand placement I think he can improve a lot on. Body posture in terms of bending at the knees, bending at the hips, you know, so that I am explosive when I go to block. Probably said the biggest thing really is just understanding his hand placements and where to put his hands on people and again, how to create that leverage."

On how he's seen DE Efe Obada grow over their time together"

"When I first had him, he was very anxious. You know, he wanted to get out and continue to do things and I think it got him to where he wasn't focusing on, you know, just learning just, 'Hey, this is what you've gotta learn. This is you gotta understand and take it to the next level.' Now you see that he has worked on specific things and he's gotten better and better on those things. Whether it's understanding the significance of, you know, get off with leverage, hand placement, and then having the counter ready to go, or the feel as, 'Hey, I've got this angle, I just gotta keep pushing it. Sometimes

he'd start up field and come underneath way too soon. Now he's gotta understand that he, he looks like he understood that once I get to a specific level, I can work back underneath. I mean, those are the little things that, that weren't innate for him. He didn't have that true understanding, because again, he was just developing as a guy."

On what it means to have international players like DT David Bada and DE Efe Obada on the team and what it does for the team:

"I think for our guys being an international player, you have a little more appreciation for guys and that come in and, and just see what they've had to go through, how hard they've had to work. The international players have a different flare about them in terms of their work ethic. There's not a lot of bad habits, so you're trying to create good habits for them, trying to get them to understand exactly what it takes to be successful. One thing I will say, and we're very fortunate because the three international guys we have and I'm throwing Sam [Sammis Reyes] in that mix, are all three tremendous athletes. They really are and we're very fortunate to have those guys. One of the benefits of having an international player like a guy like David, who's still in the learning process is that he's here, he's a practice squad guy. He's a bonus guy. It doesn't count against our numbers. You have time to watch him develop and grow. Usually it's a two, two and a half year process before you see it, in my opinion if the guy has a chance and David's getting real close to that spot."

On why he brought veteran NFL referee Roy Ellison into the huddle:

"The big reason we did was because the referees are here. I've stressed to the coaches and the players that because they are here let's take advantage of the opportunity to ask questions and point out things. This is a recovery day for us. We did an hour walk through and then the players will be going through the recovery with the training staff. We brought in a masseuse, a massage therapist, our chiropractor, and other extra trainers to do some extra work on the guy's legs backs, and muscles. This morning we had the referees here, one of the things they did is kind of go through the motions on special teams with our guys. We did a two minute drill and before we got started with the referees I explained to the guys, 'Hey, they're going to do their mechanics. When we complete a ball receivers, you take the ball to the umpire. Make sure you know who the umpires.' We introduced Roy before we got started so they knew who they were looking for and then they would run the ball to Roy. I said, 'don't put the ball on the ground because the ball might have to go to another hash, just take it straight to him.' Then when we were going through the process and when he went to put the ball down, the offensive line got tight, because we were going to spike it. Well to spike it you want that tightness, so the guy's on far off into the quarterback. You close up, so now the referee's got to fight his way through. Roy pointed out that it happened in the game, when one particular team bumped him and knocked him over where he had to struggle to get through and get up. You can't snap the ball until he gets past the quarterback going back to his position because if you do that's a penalty and it's a ten second runoff. He explained all that stuff to our guys that this is what happened, fortunate enough we had enough time that he was able to get through it and we were able to spike it and we had enough, I think it was like 10 or 11 seconds left. We said we had enough for two plays. But if we do what we do, he gets bumped and then we snap the ball while he's still in the mix. That's a penalty. That's 10 second runoff. We would've only had one second left to try and make a play. So that's why he was here. We're going to have the referees in our different position groups. We'll have the umpire and the back judge, hopefully explaining what they're looking for in holding. We'll have the side judges explain to them what they're looking for in coverage for offensive pass interference, defensive pass interference, all those little types of things. So it is a good opportunity for us to learn from the referees."

On did he show the players videos of the plays Ellison talked about:

"That will come up in this afternoon's meeting at 4:30. One thing that we're doing with our analytics guys is we're looking at trends, what people are doing, and different things and so we're sharing that with our players. This morning we went through one of the scenarios that we're seeing throughout the league. We just kind of pointed out to our guys, 'Hey, this is some things that you've got to be aware of. It's going to impact both offense, defense, and special teams.'"

On if RB Antonio Gibson is consistently lowering the shoulder as he goes through the hole:

"I would say yes. His posture going through in terms of understanding that, 'Hey, when I make my read and plant I got to lower my pads, protect myself, get my shoulders over my legs so that guys trying to, tackle me, I can protect them, using

my forearms and stuff like that.' You see those things and he's much more comfortable in doing it. It's been kind of nice to watch him. It's interesting because when you watch [RB] Brian [Robinson Jr.] run, then you watch him run, and then you watch [RB] J.D. [McKissic] run, there are differences in their styles. To throw another name in it, [RB] Jonathan Williams, he's done a really nice job. [RB] Reggie Bonnafon has shown something. I think we've got as good a group of back here with us right now that we've ever had."

On how being fully padded changes how he judges RB Brian Robinson Jr.'s running game:

"That's one of the exciting things, things change when your pad's on. We feel better about what we're seeing from the offensive line and that's big. When we're just in helmets and shells they basically have to catch guys. They're getting pushed back into the quarterback and it makes it tough on them. It makes it tough on the quarterback. So now with the pads on, you see that they get their stout, they can hold the point, they can be a little more physical with their contact, and stuff like that. But as you watch and you look at Brian, you see that with the pads on the way he hits the holes and you see a little bit more lean, which is big. It's going to be exciting tomorrow and Saturday, because they're going to be padded days and then we'll go into another day off on Sunday, but they'll be padded days. The really neat thing is, the energy level will go up at FedEx. It really will. I'm excited because we should have a pretty good turnout of fans there and it'll be good for our guys. It'll ramp some things up. We're going to do some live periods and try to get some of that excitement going for our players. I mean we want to be able to make some contact. We want to be able to get these guys prepared to tackle going into the first preseason game. That's what I'm looking forward to as far as this weekend's concerned with both Friday and Saturday's practice.