

November 16, 2022

## **Head Coach Ron Rivera**

### **On an update on the starting quarterback:**

"The biggest update more so anything else is Carson [Wentz] been cleared to start throwing. We haven't designated him for return yet to practice. He was working on the side, well actually he's working down on the field with the training staff today, but again, he wasn't designated for return. So we will start Taylor [Heinicke] this week."

### **On LB Cole Holcomb's recovery process:**

"He was on the field. They had him outside on the grass, running on the grass today. We'll see how he responds. Because of the short turnaround, today was a walkthrough practice for the most part to try and give our guys a little extra time. It was an opportunity for the coaches to, to dive into the first and second down practice day typically, which is what our Wednesday is. So we were able to cover that part of it in a walkthrough fashion. Tomorrow, we'll go helmets and shells and get the guys out on the field and get them running around a little bit more."

### **On if he's heard the viral Commanders song:**

"No, I really haven't."

### **On Defensive Coordinator Jack Del Rio's performance in the past five weeks:**

"I think what's been interesting is really not just what Jack and the defensive staff have come up, but the way they've been using the different personnel groupings. And then with the injury to Cole [Holcomb]. Some of the creative ideas they've come up with and how they've used the different players. I mean, one of the things that we've talked about a lot has been positional flex. And when you have guys that can play, whether it's safety and then come down the box and play the buffalo or a corner that come and play the nickel, a defensive end that can play like a standup Will linebacker and a three four. They've gotten creative with their guys and that's been very impressive. When I sit in the meetings, listen to some of the things they talk about, I can see it just from my background, but I can see it because I see what they're trying to do and what they're trying to accomplish with the guys. The thing that allows you to do too is a lot of these guys are getting what we're expecting from them, asking of them. You can see that they've really grown and understood the whole idea behind the game planning that we do now. And it's one of those things that's about growth and a lot of guys have really grown well. A lot of our young players are getting opportunities to play and showcase themselves. You look at some of the guys on the D-line that have contributed. I mean, the natural ones, we all see [DT] Jonathan [Allen], [DT] Daron [Payne] and [DE] Montez [Sweat]. But when you start seeing what [DT] John Ridgeway] has been doing for us as one of our defensive tackles and you watch [DE] Casey [Toohill] get an opportunity to go out and do some things and the growth by [LB] Jamin [Davis], [CB] Benjamin [St-Juste] and then [S] Darrick Forrest] and [S] Kam [Curl]. I mean, it's a good solid young group of guys that have really taken the next step. But in watching Jack too, it's like his confidence level in the players, enough that he can do these things and he's willing to put these guys in even tougher positions."

Because I think he's very comfortable and very confident in the players we have.”

**On if there are plays that stand out to where Defensive Coordinator Jack Del Rio’s trust shows up:**

“The play on the goal line against Indianapolis. He called a specific call for [LB] Jamin [Davis] when he went downhill, went through the crease and made the play. I mean that was a confidence play. There's a couple of coverage things that he's done just knowing that, hey, we can put ourselves in a really good position, so we'll call this coverage knowing that it's something that he trusts the guys to do. So you really do see it with him.”

**On what makes WR Terry McLaurin a threat on slants:**

“First of all, he's a lot more stout I think than people realize. He's got a stout toughness about him. His hands, he grabs the ball, he doesn't wait for the ball. He's trying to catch it out here and pulling it in with real strong hands. And then he's got this acceleration that if he splits it, he can go and you see it with him, you see it with [WR] Curtis [Samuel], maybe it's an Ohio State thing or something. But those guys, when they run those quick darts or slants, they have a knack for squeezing through and popping through and making big plays out of it.”

**On the possibility of QB Carson Wentz being a backup if he’s cleared in time:**

“We'll see how it goes. But again, the one thing is if that's going to be the case, if you want him to get back and be the backup, he's got to get prepared and get ready for it. So as of right now, we'll listen to what the trainers tell me tonight or tomorrow.”

**On if there is a danger in overreading the sample size in quarterbacks late in the season:**

“There is, I mean you got to look at the scheduling, look at who they're playing, stuff like that. But I'll be honest, I like who [Texans QB] Davis Mills was. I got a chance to watch him on tape, watched him last year on tape as well. We watched the movies coming out and when I was in Carolina and he was a guy that I thought had some skill sets that are really good, very smart, savvy football player for the most part, I think makes good decisions. They're just a young team. They're still growing and developing and having worked with Coach Smith and you know, knowing what he's expecting, I think Davis is learning and growing along the lines. They want to be a physical running team, live off the play action and play stout defense. I know it's very simplified, but you know, having been around coach, that's kind of what we did in Chicago back in 2004-2006.”

**On S Darrick Forrest taking a step forward this year:**

“I think with DFO, you watch how he handles the adjustments and practice and then you see him take it and put it on the field to answer your question. You've seen him take that step forward on the mental aspect of the game, he's a very bright young man. He's very eager, he practices the right way. He wants to see it and walk through it. If he's wrong, he wants to see it again. He asks a lot of good questions. So you see why his growth has been good because he's very conscientious about those things and you see it in his play, understanding how we play match technique, how we play another technique that we use in some of our other coverages. They're not necessarily overly advanced and complicated, but yet they still require you to think on the run. And he's been able to handle that pretty good. One of the things that you see, I was asked a great question today I got about the play he made on the interception on the caused fumble. Because of his alignment, he's reading the releases of one and two to his side. Two drags underneath, which it tells him, hey, I got to launch now to get vertical, which you see him do. He barely misses making the play on the ball,

but, because of his great effort and hustle, and the same thing with Benjamin [St-Juste], we were able to get the fumble recovery that was caused by Benjamin. But that was an example that he's got to do something on the fly. He sees it happen and bam, his instincts take over and he makes the break that he's supposed to."

**On the sense of relief that he has knowing he has multiple options at the quarterback position:**

"We have time. I mean, that's the really good thing that is on our side. I mean, [Heinicke] has done some good things and we'll see how it happens this week. But to me, it's part of having to make a decision. I mean, you gotta be realistic. You gotta watch and you gotta see, and that's what we've been doing. We've been paying attention to it. We've been paying attention to not just an individual, but as much as it affects a unit and a team. And so, having this situation is a pretty good one. It's a good problem to have."

**On what he has seen from QB Sam Howell during the stretch that he has been the backup quarterback:**

"Yeah, he's done a good job. He really has. One of the things that we talked to him about more so than anything else was there are certain technique things that he's gotta improve on. Footwork being one of them. You watch some of the stuff from training camp and you see a little bit of lazy footwork, and he probably was able to get away with that in the college ranks. But being up on our level, you gotta understand just how important it is. You've gotta stick to going through your techniques, doing things the right way every time. I mean, this is a little bit different. The expectations, the intensity level, what's required of you. I think those stakes are higher."

**On what he wants to see Heinicke improve on:**

"Well, I think you'd like to continue to see the consistency in what he's doing and how he's doing things. I think you wanna see him continue to take what's there. At times he does have a tendency to wanna try and force it in certain places, but he's done a good job. He really has. And the guys have rallied around him."

**On if DE Chase Young will play on Sunday:**

"That we'll find out. Today we were inside. He had an opportunity to go through all the stuff they were supposed to. But the real indicator will be how he does on Thursday and Friday."

**On how many snaps he anticipates Young will play once he returns in his first game:**

"It'll be a pitch count. It'll be a pitch count and something we'll have to monitor closely. Again, because the big part of it is, especially right now is you want to get as close as you can to live action and you really can't. So we have to try and figure out how he can get as many good reps in these next couple of days to get a good gauge as to where he is."

**On if games like the Philadelphia game were what he envisioned when the team drafted RB Brian Robinson Jr. to add him to a backfield with RB Antonio Gibson:**

"Well, it's one of the things that I talked about when we made the pick. I was part of a two running back system my first go around in Carolina and we had two quality guys in Carolina with those running backs. I mean, [former Carolina RB] DeAngelo Williams and [former Carolina RB] Jonathan Stewart is what I see here. I mean, I think we got two guys that fit the description. We got a big physical powerful guy and then we got an elusive guy that's got great hands and that's what, you know, to me I think you need is some sort of two back system. Then you have your third guy that's a little bit of a change of pace, and so we feel pretty good about that room right now. We really do."

**On what he sees from Robinson now versus what he saw in training camp and on if physically returning from the injury he sustained has affected him in the past couple games:**

"Well, I just think now for him, it's continuing to work himself back into form. I mean, it's been a while since

we've activated him and he's just starting, I think to come into his own. He's starting to get a good feel. I think the great thing or the crazy part about what happened was in this past game he had, I believe it was six carries that were third-and-one, and one was I think it was a second or third-and-one on the goal line. And so his average didn't look as good as it could have been. But he still carried the ball, 27 times or something like that, which is very impressive. It really was."

**On what statistics he looks at to determine if the running game is working:**

"I think really is, you look at the third downs and how many third-and-four or lesses you end up with. We had a couple things and I showed the players these clips today was where we went first down, second, third down where we went run, run, run, run, run. And that was what was impressive. We even attempted a third-and-four, but that's how confident we were. I think we went incomplete on the first down, but then we ran the ball the next two times to get the first down. And that's when you really feel like the running game is really clicking."

**On how much the return of T Sam Cosmi along with TEs Logan Thomas and John Bates getting back into a groove can help the running game even more:**

"Well, I think what [T] Cornelius Lucas has done has been very stout for the most part. I do understand Sam is a little different player. I think having those two tight ends round back into shape would be really good for us. I do see your point because Sam is a little bit lower to the ground, has a little bit better leverage. He does get a little bit more movement, and having guys like that out there really does help resonate with the running game. There were a couple of things that we did really well on Monday Night, that when you watch the running game and get a chance to really break the tape down. There's some real good positives."