

November 23, 2022

## **Head Coach Ron Rivera**

### **On the plan for QB Carson Wentz this week:**

“Well, I think right now it's to see how he looks back in team settings. We have him doing some stuff off to the side, then we bring him in and get him involved in some of the other stuff that we're doing. As far as the game's concerned, we'll proceed with [QB] Taylor [Heinicke] as the starter and Sam as the backup.”

### **On how DE Chase Young looked today:**

“Chase looked good. He did, he had a good day, showed us some things that we've been looking for and we'll continue to monitor his progress and we'll see how he does on Friday.”

### **On the point the season turned around:**

“Well, I think there's several moments that you see some things. Obviously, there's reason for you to be optimistic. It's been the play of the defense some, it's been the play of the guys up front on the offensive line. It's been some of the play on some individuals that have just done some really good things and just kind of everything's been coming together and heading in the right direction. I mean, there's a lot of things to point to. Is there one specific thing? I don't think so.”

### **On the Atlanta Falcons last year compared to now:**

“I see that they've kind of built off of what they did last year. I think one thing you see is they have a little bit more of a mobile quarterback. They involve him a little bit more in their run game. I think they took a big hit losing [TE Kyle] Pitts. I think he's a heck of a football player, but they've got some pretty good pieces. I think they got a very dynamic explosive running game that we've got to be able to handle.”

### **On the challenges the Atlanta offense can present:**

“Well, I think first and foremost, I think [RB] Cordarrelle [Patterson] is a heck of football player when he gets football in his hands. He's a dynamic guy that we've got to account for. I think [QB Marcus] Mariota poses the threat of quarterback mobility and so we've got to be able to handle that as well. They are a very, as I said earlier, a dynamic running team that we have to be able to contain and try to limit as much as possible just because they are a play action team as well.”

### **On what he is thankful for:**

“Family.”

### **On QB Carson Wentz becoming the backup when he is healthy:**

“We'll take it one game at a time. More so anything else right now as we're getting ready for Atlanta, Taylor will start and we'll have [QB] Sam [Howell] as the backup.”

### **On NFL games taking place on Black Friday:**

“We have games on Christmas, we have games on, I mean, every other holiday so what the heck? What's the difference? I mean if we were playing, I'm not shopping.”

**On DT's Jon Allen and Daron Payne stopping the run:**

“The philosophy is you want to play vertical, you want to play into your creases, you want to play vertical. And so kind of the idea and the thought process is you play the run on your way to the quarterback. I think we're one of the top teams in tackles for loss and I think a lot of it has to do with how vertical our guys get up front. And if they can get into the creases, they can be very disruptive as we've seen and I think that's part of it. When you look at those guys, it's not, we're not two gapping. We're not grabbing a guy trying to figure one way or the other. I think they've really bought into the philosophy of this defense of what [Defensive Coordinator] Jack [Del Rio] and the defensive guys are preaching. And it is, let's get vertical, let's get after it and we'll make plays.”

**On how he feels about the perception of the team starting with him:**

“I think it is really about the players and that's the thing that, I guess it was after Chicago, I had a little bit of a blow up on you guys just because I want to be about the players. Our defense just got done playing a great game and people wanted to ask me questions about the outside, and I want the focus to stay on those guys. I mean, we got some guys that really deserve some accolades and they're just starting to get 'em. They really are. And it's a lot of fun to see our guys be successful and that's really what we're trying to keep the focus on. I think that's a big part of it is if we can just keep our focus on this, we have an opportunity, we have a chance. I mean, we won some games. I'm pretty excited, I'm excited to see what the crowd's going to be like on Sunday. I really am. And again, because to me, it's about the players. It's about what they do on the field that that's really important and really cool.”

**On the impact that Former Commanders S Sean Taylor had:**

“I think the unfortunate part, obviously, he lost his life at such an early age and what he could have truly been. What has been really cool has been a lot of young guys after his passing really understood what he brought to the game, the way he played the game, his physicality, his mentality and it is kind of neat for this organization because of the legacy that this organization has. One of the originals started in 1932 and you look at the things that have happened, a lot of the social impact things that have happened with Bobby Mitchell, as another example. I mean, this legacy is great. I mean, you talk about the other guys too. I mean, you talk about the John Riggins and the Sonny Jurgensen and, and you know, guys like that. And now you have Sean Taylor who had a legacy of just being a dynamic, impactful defensive player, especially at the safety position as well, so it's kind of a neat thing. It's an opportunity for the organization to honor one of its own, one of its truly own of its own, that that did make that kind of impact.”

**On how he feels about having a game like this mean so much in the NFC playoff race:**

“Giddy. I mean, it's really cool. I mean, look at this right now. It's one of the things that we hopefully are working to and we've gotten close to where we can repeat it and we can continue to play well and do those things. It's important because again, when you get this late into the season, you want that attention, you want that focus also because it keeps the players engaged, it keeps them tuned in and, and if you look at it, every NFC game we will play, as you say, is important. It'll be meaningful for us, as will all the games we play, including the AFC games we gotta play, but for our guys more so anything else, it's about being able to keep them engaged, keep their focus, because we have an opportunity. We have a chance and we can do something pretty, pretty cool if we can just stick with it.”

**On if the phrase this team is built for November/December football when it gets cold is true and if this team could be built for this part of the season:**

"I think we can be especially with the way we play and, and hopefully the weather will cooperate and be bad. Yeah, seriously. I mean, because if you run the ball well and you get inclement weather, it could be to your benefit. If it gets cold, it could be to your benefit. Defense being stout and physical up front that helps because if teams are gonna run the ball because of the weather this time of season, that's also good. So yeah, it could be one of those things that you could sit there and say it's true. What I like to think is, is, you know and again, from some of my past history is just because we get to this point, it's like everything is coming together. Guys are understanding what we need from them. They're healthy. They're getting healthy, they're back in, and we're putting 'em in position to be successful. I kind of hope more so than anything else is this time of year we've kind of put it together and now we've put ourselves in a position where we can be really competitive."

**On if the passing game is headed to a place where it can be to help lift the team to a win:**

"I think it can mostly because of the playmakers we have. We've got a few guys that have shown you that if we put the ball in their catch radius, they're gonna go out and make those catches. I mean, you look at what Terry [McLaurin] means to us and Curtis [Samuel] and Jahan [Dotson]. Those three guys, if the ball's close, they're gonna snatch it. Then you look at the tight ends that we have and look at their ability to get open. Good example is what we saw last week from Logan [Thomas]. It was by far his best game of the year. He's starting to look like himself again, like the guy we had a year ago before he got hurt. You throw Cole [Turner] into that mix as a young pass receiving tight ends and Armani [Rodgers] who we hope he can get back out on the field, another one of those young tight ends. And then the back combination and you've seen what it means when AG [Antonio Gibson] is in space with the ball in his hands as a receiver. So, I think we have the components, we just gotta make sure we can get the ball to them and with Taylor there's, you just never know, but you know that it's possible."

**On LB Cole Holcomb:**

"Cole's got a foot injury and it's kind of been touch and go a little bit. Hopefully it turns and it just gets better and better and we'll see. But, he is gonna go see a specialist about it and we'll see."

**On how QB Carson Wentz has been in meeting rooms and on the sideline:**

"He's been excellent. He really has. He's been a true pro. I mean, when you watch him, when he first came back, he got behind Taylor [Heinicke] right away. He got behind Sam [Howell] and really helped out in the meetings. He's still very engaged asking the types of questions that you would ask, you should ask and if they aren't ask, he'll ask them. You watch him talking with the receivers about their routes to talk to the running backs about their angles, talk to the offense line. He has done a heck of a job being part of it and staying engaged and very supportive. It's been really good. It has. All right, thanks Coach