

THE WASHINGTON COMMANDERS

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PERFORMANCE CENTER

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Defensive Coordinator Joe Whitt Jr.

Opening Statement:

“Alright, let's talk about Kansas City then we'll get to Seattle. So, going into the game we said that the teams that have had success over the years with these guys they don't let them possess drives and keep drives going by either, when they have opportunity to get a turnover or they don't penalize. And that's what we did in the first half. We got the two turnovers, we didn't have any penalties, and we played very aggressive. And the second half, the second play in the second half, we got a penalty that gave them, it would've been a third down, gave them a first down, kept it going, they got an explosive and then we didn't cage rush on that fourth down, allowed the quarterback to get out, that was a big play. I think those two plays were big plays. And then we caused the fumble, and we didn't get on it. So, that gave them another down. If the score is 14-7 at that time, we give the ball back to our offense and we have our opportunity to change the game. So, we have to consistently, when you play a team like that and they have a quarterback that they have, you gotta make sure you make those plays. And we made some in the first half, second half we didn't and that's how the game got to where it was. Alright, talking about Seattle, another talented quarterback, arm talent, can make every throw, he doesn't scramble as much as [Kansas City Chiefs QB] Patrick [Mahomes], so he's in the pocket. They run the ball, a lot of 12 personnel, run the ball well. Their receiver [Seattle Seahawks WR Jaxon Smith-Njigba], having an outstanding year so far. I mean, he's faster than you think he is, he's elusive, he can get out of his hips. And then [Seattle Seahawks WR] Cooper [Kupp] as well, Cooper blocks like a [Former Pittsburgh Steelers WR] Hines Ward or [Former Arizona Cardinals WR] Larry Fitzgerald or [Former NFL WR] Anquan Boldon, those type of blockers. And then they are accomplished receivers as well. And so, have a lot of respect for him, they have a pair tight ends, a traditional Y and a U that moves and offensive line's blocking well, so running back's running hard. He can slash and dash and run behind his path, great vision. So, like I said, this is another very good team but if we can produce the turnovers and minimize the penalties, minimize the explosives, we'll have a chance to play good.”

On the reasoning behind the defense playing faster:

“I think it was a little bit of both [scheme change and personnel change]. Like I said, we minimized what we did. And then you saw TO [S Tyler Owens] and [LB] Jordan [Magee], the way they just ran and hit. And then you gotta say Reavo [S Jeremy Reaves], Reavo played really, really fast. I mean, he played physical, fast, he played a really good game. And so, those guys popped off on the film.”

On Owens and Magee having a bigger role moving forward:

“Yeah, when you play well you get more opportunities and it's going to be hard to get Jordan off the field. So, we have to make sure that we can find roles for him. Same as TO, TO's a guy that has a lot of hit power to him and a lot of speed. I mean, there was a ball that got on the sideline, and you just saw those two kids just boom, going to it right now. And, man, that was good to see. So, we'll find

spaces for them to continue to get roles on them in the game.”

On defending Smith-Njigba:

“Yeah, there's certain times that you know where he's going to be and in those times you can shift the coverage those ways, but every down somebody's going to have a hard down. And within that you have to stand up on those hard downs. So, we're going to do our due [diligence] with him but every once in a while, you're going to have a hard down, depending on the call. And so, we try to minimize those because he's been so explosive and the ball has gone to him so, so much.”

On DT Jer’Zhan Newton:

“I think the last couple games he's played really well. Last game he got hurt, alright, and so he was in and out because he was hurt, but he was playing fast and explosive and throwing hands and I'm hoping that he's available this week, because he's been trending in the right direction. So, the numbers, sometimes it's because of personnel group or packaging but he's been playing well.”

On the biggest change for a player going from inside to outside on the defensive line:

“Well, there's more space out there and then you have to be able to set the edge, the length and the edge setting ability depending on the call that we have. And so, the ability to play six technique, the techniques are different. You're not playing on the edge, sometimes you're playing down the middle, but you should be able to move that guy as a tight end. We don't expect our bigs to be able to be blocked by tight end, so we should be able to knock him back in that standpoint.”

On S Quan Martin:

“Quan produced another fumble, he's communicating well, I'd like to see all of them back there produce the ball. But Reavo, like I talked about, you talking about the whole safety group, I thought he played just a really, really good game. He had two tackles for loss, just coming up, playing physical. [S Darnell] Savage, he's communicating, he's getting back into the groove of being new to us. So, I think as a group those guys are trending and then TO with the speed and the violence that he plays with gives us a new addition.”

On if Kansas City did anything specific in the second half to be successful:

“No, it wasn't anything. They have a great quarterback. And so, we foul on the second play, which would've made it made it third down. They get a first down there. He scrambles, tight end's blocking, the guy that's covering the tight end tries to play help side defense, should've stayed over, his guy, tight end, gets out for a long one. Then we get down there on fourth and two and we have a cage rush, we let the quarterback get out. That play probably me off more than anything because we know where we wanted to send him. When we sent him the way we wanted to send him, [LB] Frankie [Luvu] hit him. We had the penalty at the end of the half or we got a sack with 55 [DE Jacob Martin]. You let him go the way he wants to go, he's going to hurt you. He can make every throw off of every platform. And then we didn't recover the fumble, we recovered that fumble when it's 14-7, we give the ball back to our offense, give them another shot to go get it. So, that's how you beat that team. If you allow them to get extra possessions or you don't take capitalize yours, you're going to get beat. And so, we capitalized in the first half, and we had two penalties that hurt us in the second half and then we didn't get the fumble and we let out on the fourth and two, that was basically the game.”

On using more five-man fronts against Kansas City:

“We performed well. Some of that was to get Jordan [Magee] on the field and we had Uce [Luvu],

Frankie playing down at the end some. And we've done it some throughout the year and when we first started doing it, we did it with really big people and people started getting on the perimeter and so we sort of changed how we done it now and it's been good for us. That package has been really good."

On DT Daron Payne and on how important he is to the defense:

"Well, not just Daron, but JK [DT Javon Kinlaw] and Johnny [Newton] and [DT] Eddie [Goldman], the tackles, people still aren't running the ball in between the tackles. I think we're like fourth or fifth when the balls are run in there. Where we're having issues is the C and D gap. So, those guys are doing a good job of stuffing the run inside. They're playing violently and then they're also getting pushed and getting pressure on the quarterback from inside."

On OLB Von Miller and on his playing time:

"With the injuries that we've had, it's going to be needed that he's more on some of the second downs, some of the first downs as well. But we want him out doing all third downs. He has juice, he has still has a really quick first step, but we're really down with the defensive ends. And then Johnny, that's the next person that we would kick out there, and he's hurt as well, so that's one less person. So, we're going to, if we have to put another linebacker like we put Uce down there we'll find a way, but we'll put a good group out there that can go out here and give us a great chance to just go play fast."

On what keeps him up at night:

"This is the same thing every year, I mean, we work the same way. Let put it this way, I've been on a team that won 19 straight games, alright then, right now I've been on a team that I think lost maybe six or seven games in a row, work the same. You just come to work, and you work as hard as you can and then you go home. If you put the work in, you really don't worry much about the result because the work is the work. You know what I'm saying? You don't change it because you win or lose. The walkthrough we just had was outstanding. The energy, the buzz, you wouldn't know that this team had lost three games in a row. I mean, the communication, the energy, the focus, the detail, it was one of the best walkthroughs that we've had. And we're part of a three-game skid. The only way you get out of it is to work through your failures. That's where success is on the other side of that. And so, the only thing that really matters is winning right now. And so, we're going to find a way to win but what we're not going to do is have a negative cloud while we're having some struggles. Everybody else can, cool, go at it, but we're not because the only way that we'll get out of this is to stick together, work our ass off and go win. And if we lose, people keep saying what they're going to say, alright, but we just gotta win. And the attitude of the players is exactly the way it should be."

On defending Seattle's rushing attack:

"Yeah, they do a nice job of getting on the edge and that's where we struggle, on the edge. People are not running into our big guys, so we gotta make sure that if the people are running toss cracks or getting the ball on the edge, we do a better job of setting the edge or popping it and getting population to the ball. Because that's what's going to happen and that's what they're going to try to do."

On one win flipping a season:

"Every win is hard to get, but it's some truth to that. Like I said, we've been four and six before and made it to the playoffs. That's when back when it was 16 games and you won the last six games and

went deep into the playoffs. You gotta get the first win then start stacking them. And there's no time like now to get it, but the thing that's positive for me is the guys are working and there's nobody in the building dropping their head. There's nobody, the guys are doing the same meetings or extra meetings and we're trying to be creative in the way that we're approaching it. So, the process is right, now we gotta go get the results done.”