

November 6, 2025

Defensive Coordinator Joe Whitt Jr.

Opening Statement:

“Alright, let's get rolling. It's evident that the last four weeks have not gone the way that we want them as a defense or a team. So, when things like that happen, you have to adjust to make some changes. So, I know DQ [Head Coach Dan Quinn] talked about earlier in the week that I'll be coming down to the field. I went and asked them to do that for a number of reasons. The first reason, I've been in the box, Q, most of the coordinators that I've been around called it from the box Q, [Carolina Panthers Defensive Assistant Dom] Capers, [Minnesota Vikings Assistant Head Coach] Mike Pettine, even when I was in college, the coordinators always call it from the box. You have a good view, you can see, you don't really have to have as much help with personnel, people coming and out. So, that's why the advantage of being in the box. Moving to the field, I think the energy that I have in practice that can be probably positive within the game for the players. A couple of guys have been asking for me to come down as well. And so, I think it's time for that to happen. We gotta do whatever we have to do to get a win. And so, the play has not been, especially this last week, to the standard at all. And like I said, that that starts with me. I gotta do a better job getting the coaches to get the players to understand how we're going to do it. And we gotta get this thing turned. We gotta get it turned right now. So, with that, any questions?”

On if he can name an example from this season where being on the field would have helped:

“No, I don't think from that standpoint. Because you can look back and hindsight is 20-20. And I'm not going to sit here and say that, okay, if I would've been down there before this thing would've been different, I'm not going to say that. I'm going to say that we're going to try something different because the results that we've been getting aren't good enough. And so, if you keep doing the same thing you've been doing, we've changed the way we practice, we've changed our walk throughs, the meeting structures, the voiceovers that we send them. We're trying to find, offense, defensively and special teams, the whole team, we're trying to get out of this rut that we're in. But my focus is on the defense, and it hasn't been near good enough. So, this is a change that I wanted to make.”

On how the cornerbacks will align this week without CB Marshon Lattimore:

“We'll see that on game day. I'm not going to say who's going to go where, that's a competitive advantage, but I hate that we're losing Marshon, I will say that.”

On what he loses by going from the box to the field:

“You just can't see as well, and so when I'm in the box I don't have to, like I said, you have always have a guy telling personnel. So, I could see, I did personnel years in Green Bay, so I could see guys running in and out so I can get a call in quicker. On the field you can't see it as well, you can't see if the ball's on the hash or in the middle as well when you're on the field when you can see it. So, if you have certain calls that are predicted by the hash or the middle of the field. So, things like that. But we have guys, we're going to adjust and we're going to work around it.”

On the challenge of losing three defensive ends to injury:

“Yeah and I never make excuses when we come up here, but the injuries are real. You lose those three guys, you lose [S] Will [Harris] at safety, you lose now Marshon, you had Quan’s [S Quan Martin] going in and out, but that's part of football. And we have to be able to generate pressure on the quarterback. Once DA [DE Dorance Armstrong] went out, we haven't generated as much pressure. Probably have to do a little bit more, I think on first and second down, I think we send the second most pressure in the league. But we might have to send more, do a little bit of things, but I don't want to expose the back end as much. So, there's a balance there but losing those guys, it has affected the way it's called some.”

On CB Jonathan Jones:

“Well, first he's a veteran player that still has real speed. He comes from that Patriot system, so he understands a variety of football. He's a guy that can play inside and outside. He can hold vertical control. He's tough, he tackles well. So, he gives a lot of versatility to where if we need to put him outside or inside, we can put him in those spaces.”

On recurring issues that are surprising:

“I would say from the standpoint of the explosives, we didn't give up explosives last year. Hell, we were the best in the league in my time in Dallas and giving up the fewest explosives. I'm not used to it. So, the amount of explosives that we're giving up in the past game is really frustrating because they're coming from mistakes that really shouldn't happen and I gotta do a better job, or we gotta do a better job of getting that communicated. And so, that's probably the main thing.”

On CB Mike Sainristil's coverage on Seattle Seahawks WR Tony Horton's second touchdown:

“We were in a man coverage. It was actually a double. We were doubling 11 [Seattle Seahawks WR Jaxon Smith-Njigba] there. And there was a communication error between two other guys. But that didn't really affect Mikey on that play. He got beat off the line of scrimmage and then got beat to the seven. But the communication error with the other two guys had nothing to effect on him. It wouldn't have changed that play. We had to do better job of playing man coverage in that area.”

On deciding where to play Sainristil:

“Yeah, we're going put people in position to where we feel like gives us the best chance to win. He's produced three interceptions. He's produced the ball, he can do it from inside, last year he did from outside. But we're definitely going to put people in the position that we feel that can best serve us to win that particular game. And then when we get to the next game, we'll move from there.”

On LB Frankie Luvu's fine and on preventing hip drop tackles:

“Yeah, it takes me back to when they started doing the targeting rule. And as coaches everybody fought it at the beginning. Where in this environment, we don't necessarily fight it, we ask the league, alright, help us teach it better. Because they're difficult plays, that's why you don't see a lot of flags on them, there's just really fines because they're difficult plays to regulate. And so, we're talking about, we're working drills, one more step, and how not to throw your body into it. But it's a fast, violent game and the player safety is the number one thing and we understand that. And just like with the targeting, how we've changed the way that we hit the quarterback, how you don't fall on the quarterback, this is a new change so the defensive players will catch up to it, but it is a difficult thing for the defensive players, especially when somebody's running away from you and you get to them and somebody might hit them from the opposite side and natural reaction is you go

that way. But it's something that we're going to have to learn as a coaches and as players to navigate through because that's where the league is going.”

On LB Jordan Magee:

“Jordan has been a really bright spot. Even on gloomy days that we've had on some of these, his run and hit ability, you feel his, his speed, you see the violence, he's constantly punching at the ball once he gets there, his drops have been good. So, we got to make sure we just keep putting packages where he's on the field and he's adding to what we do. I've been pleased with him.”

On how aggravating the defensive performances have been and on what else can be changed:

“The aggravating thing is we're not winning, we're not playing a good brand of ball holistically and defensively at all. I mean, the last four weeks I wouldn't have thought that we would've been playing the way that we have been. And so, that's where I am with that right now. And we're looking at everything and like I said, it starts with me. I don't dodge anything. I don't think I've ever came up here and made any excuses or put it on the players or put it on anybody else. It's my job to get the defense to play at a better level and I haven't done that. So, I gotta do a better job and trust me, just working at it every which way and we'll get it figured out. We gotta get it figured out now if we're going get this season back on track.”

On the challenges against Detroit's offense:

“Yeah, I usually start the press conference with the other team's offense, and it starts with the quarterback [Detroit Lions QB Jared Goff]. He throws with anticipation. He's calm in the pocket, his eligibles, 14 [Detroit Lions WR Amon-Ra St. Brown], 11 [Detroit Lions WR Kalif Raymond], 1 [Detroit Lions WR Jameson Williams]. They have just so much speed and then versatility from that standpoint right there. And then the running backs, you have two different types of running backs. One that can get on the edge right now and go, and then you have a guy that runs a little bit more behind his pads. Offensive line, they have one of the best tackles in football and they move people. And then I think, the tight end [Detroit Lions TE Sam] LaPorta, I think he's just, in my opinion, he's 1, 2, 3 top tight ends in the league. I have a lot of respect and regard for his ability. We talk about, and somebody say, this guy's better, I don't know if there's a guy that I could say necessarily is a better tight end than him from a skill set standpoint. I think he's really talented.”

On what's been different since Sunday night's loss against Seattle:

“Well, we changed the structure of the meetings. We changed the, not necessarily the structure of the practice, the practice is the same, but the structure of the meetings, adding more walkthroughs, doing more voiceovers so they can come to work ready instead of just come to work. So, they have homework assignments and that standpoint of, alright, you're getting your voiceovers, so we could take the meeting and split some of that meeting time out and put it on the field and do extra walkthroughs, more walkthroughs, more plays, more plays, and then we'll catch it back up in the classroom towards the evening. So, like I said, we're exhausting everything that we can to get this thing turned and like DQ said, the only people that can get it turned are the people in the building. And so, we're working at it.”

On if he thought about moving to the sideline earlier in the season:

“No, I really didn't because the viewpoint of seeing things from up top, I trust my coaches on the field, communicate well with them on the field. It's at the point where, like I said, a couple players came and asked, ‘Hey, could you do this? Would you think about doing it?’ And once I heard that from them, okay, I went to Q and said, ‘Hey, Q let's look at it, let me go down there and it might

make a difference.’”

On if the current defense is significantly different from the one he envisioned at the start of the season:

“Yeah, that's a really good question. It's somewhat different. It's not where I envision it to be from a schematic standpoint, but we had to change some things because of injury and some because of this year, the explosives. So, you have to adjust. You can't just keep doing and giving up things, but it is different than what I was expecting, yes.”