

February 10, 2026

## **Defensive Coordinator Daronte Jones**

### **On how he's prepared throughout his career to be ready for this moment:**

“Just being around some of the talented coaches, great minds that I've been a part of. Growing up, you know, from [Former Cincinnati Bengals Head Coach] Marvin Lewis to [Denver Broncos Defensive Coordinator] Vance Joseph, [Former Minnesota Vikings Head Coach] Mike Zimmer, [Indianapolis Colts Defensive Coordinator] Lou Anarumo and even as recently as [Minnesota Vikings Head Coach] Kevin O'Connell and [Minnesota Vikings Defensive Coordinator] Brian Flores, they've prepared me and being around them learn lessons, how to lead, how to structure their side of the ball, how to implement certain learning techniques, and finding out about the culture amongst the guys have helped guide me to where I'm today.”

### **On how coaches he's worked with have shaped his defensive philosophy and what he hopes to bring to Washington:**

“Versatility, adaptability, using our players' strengths to the best of their ability, maximizing what they do, being a feature that, and then minimizing the things that they don't do well. And each coach has provided a certain way of highlighting whoever that athlete may be and whatever that strength may be that allowed them to get to their highest level. And so, my ability and learning from those guys in terms of how to tap into each individual player and each individual player is different. But it all starts with relationships, and the biggest thing that I've gotten in this profession is how to attack and relate to players and connect with those guys. And that starts with the relationships aspect of it. And what does that mean? That starts with trust.”

### **On how working with different coordinators has affected his goals for playcalling:**

“You naturally want to be moldable because I've been around so many different schemes, I think that's an advantage of mine. There aren't too many schemes that I have not been a part of. There's, you know, everyone comes from some type of tree. And so, because of that, I've been able to answer your question, be able to implement various things from each scheme that I like and I want to pull from. So, whether it's the Zimmer scheme, ‘Hey, I like this on third down, I like the mug looks there’. Or if it's Flores and the versatility and how we can use, one person in multiple ways based off of their strengths. That's what you want to pull from.”

### **On how his year at Louisiana State University shaped him :**

“It was great lessons at LSU. Having the ability to lead a staff. I think the defensive staff at that time was 16 on defense alone [laugh] and so that's a large staff that you have to organize and be structured in a way that you're very efficient in how you meet and how you prepare day to day and how you get the players prepared. And so, with that, also, with 16 different personalities and you're dealing with grown men and everyone's different and everyone has different backgrounds, different experiences that they can bring. You wanted to make it a collaborative effort, right? And include everyone. And you want guys that can contribute, guys that have high character guys that are also

teachers, and they can communicate in their own light. And so being at LSU learning how to deal with different personalities, not only from the player perspective, because that's been, you know, you get used to that at various levels, but in terms of at that level, at the SEC and going into SEC's competition and what that means was very instrumental for me.”

**On if he has an idea of 3-4 or 4-3 for the defensive lineup:**

“Multiple, I think 3-4, 4-3. They're just numbers. Still seven man spacing, [laugh]. So, I always say it's not how they line up, it's how they wind up. And so, you can create that number system in numerous ways.”

**On the best way to use LB Frankie Luvu's skillset:**

“Love Frankie Luvu. Watched him on tape. He's a guy that before I even got here that we would watch and put on a tape in our meeting room. I love his athleticism. He's best going downhill, getting the match up on running backs, that's always a key. You're going to hear that a lot in terms of match ability and putting guys in advantageous positions. He's best when he can go downhill, use his athleticism to win on edges, use his speed, so time distance and space to encounter those matchups. And you want to put him in that situation where he's matchable on the running back. And I think running backs are one of the guys, on offense that gets the least amount of reps and protections.”

**On how he's seen defensive trends change throughout his time in the league:**

“The coverages, it's almost like things come back full circle. So, at that time, years ago, people were leaving the spot drop schematics, and they were going more match coverages, so match three quarters and things of that nature. And now you're starting to see a trend coming back full circle to where schemes are starting to become more vision based and especially on early down. So, you see that trend starting to happen. You see guys going more shell coverage, where at one point it was really middlefield closed just in terms of structurally. And so, there's always things that you can pull from 10 years ago that is still prepping to today in terms of the physicality and the fundamentals and the techniques that will never change no matter what year that is. So, you want to emphasize that and lean on that. And I think that's where defenses can continue to grow. If you watch the last couple of years of the Super Bowl, it's come down to fundamentals and techniques and winning the line of scrimmage. So that will never change in my opinion.”

**On why Washington was the right fit:**

“Well, that's a loaded question. I mean, it's, again, I grew up in the area. I grew up, you know, wearing the burgundy and supporting the Washington organization. I went to elementary school, middle school, literally right across the street from where the stadium is in Palmer Park, Maryland. I went to Kenmore Middle School, and I went to Matthew Henson Elementary. So, growing up a diehard fan, the family's backing it. So, when the opportunity came, I thought it was a win-win situation. I wanted to put my best foot forward. And then when you talk about the people in the building, such as [Head Coach] Dan Quinn, such as [General Manager] Adam Peters, great ownership with [Managing Partner] Josh Harris and the crew. One I want to say thank you for that, by the way. I didn't mean to say it. I want to start off just by thanking the ownership. Josh Harris, thanking Dan Quinn, thanking Adam Peters for the opportunity that they've afforded me. But when you're around certain people and you see the alignment of the organization, ownership management, head coach, quarterback, it's a win-win for not only the DMV, but a win-win for me as well.”

**On players he's excited to work with:**

"I mean, I had a chance to speak with quite a few players already and they're all excited to get going just as I am. But I think the team is filled with some versatility players and I think you can be, they can be used in several ways. You look at a [CB Mike] Sainristil who was very versatile coming out of college, and the things that he was able to accomplish at University of Michigan, not only winning the championship, but the way he done it, right? And how he led those guys there. When you talk to the guys from that championship team, everyone points to him as being the leader. You look at a [S] Quan Martin, who I know evaluating him, coming out, you know, we were like, 'Hey, is he a safety? Is he a nickel? Is he a corner?'. That's another guy that has versatility. You know? And then I think when you look at [S] Will Harris and how he's able to move in the line of scrimmage, cover tight ends on the deep paths, you look at a [LB] Jordan Magee, another guy who's an on the ball, off the ball, the list goes on and on. You look at a you know, [DT] Javon Kinlaw, who can play all different levels up front. And so, the talent is there, the skillset is there. It's our job with the staff to maximize those skill talent. And I'm excited to work with the staff that we have. There's going to be a lot of collaborative effort going forward and the communication and we get a chance to teach, right? You know, we talk about the foundation from ground up and trying to connect to these players and find out how they learn. And I think that's the biggest thing going forward. To be able to utilize versatility. You got to figure out how do they learn? We all, as human beings, we learn differently, right? And so, each player is going to fall into one of the four categories of learning styles, and it's our responsibility to figure out a third visual, auditory, auditory, read and write, or if it's kinesthetic learners. And that's our job to pull that out of them."

**On making plans for players before he meets them versus after meeting them:**

"I think it's a balance, you know, so coming in already, I've had a chance to watch the tape on just about everyone here in the building, on the team. I've developed. And here's the teaching background I've developed an IEP for each player, an individualized education program, but just for football in a way that these are the things that I see on tape that they do well, things they can improve in. How can we as a staff assist them in that improvement? And then when you meet that player and that player comes here, and you start to get to know that guy, you may have to tweak it a little bit in terms of, again, their learning style. All right. Is it more of walkthrough? Is it more film-based? Is it more auditory? So, then we can tweak it, but at least the overall 30,000-foot view plan of how to improve that individual player has already been assessed."

**On allowing players to apply skills that they haven't been given the opportunity to:**

"Well, a little bit of both. You know, every player, every player sees themselves differently than we as coaches and you as media may see them, right? And so, as rightfully so, but that getting to know that player first starts with, I want to go back to me finding out what's their why. How they're motivated? Is it external motivational or internal motivations? That opens the lines of effective communication. And then when those lines of effective communications open, and now we can kind of tap into what you can and cannot do based off of your strengths, and then have an open dialogue of, this is what I see that you do well, these are things, these are areas I think you can improve in. How do you see that? And then come to a kind of an agreement and then move forward from that point on. But I think it's definitely a, it's a constant open line of communication. You got to have communication. You know, you don't want any void, you know, negativity kind of fills the void when it's empty, right? So, we want to continue to have that effective line of communication, both player and coach, and that way we can help them grow as individuals. But you got to know the person before you know the player."

**On what will allow him to have an impact on this organization:**

“Relationships. I think one of my strengths is the ability to connect to people. I've taught at every different level. I've coached at every different level from division one, division two, division three, one Double A, high school. I've taught high school, coached the CFL [Canadian Football League], and now in the NFL. And what you come to find out is when you've been on so many different levels, you come across so many different people, right? And they come from all different backgrounds of life, and you have to find a way to meet them where they are. That connection allows the relationship to grow, that it can allow the growth of that person to get to the highest levels, and they can maximize their abilities. And so, I intend to get to know these players, as I've already done so far on a personal level. You know, talk about their wives and their kids and so forth. But that's my strength, is the ability to connect and build relationships and to teach and then everything else shows up on the tape.”

**On what defense will look like and what emotions it will bring to fans under his leadership:**

“I'm not going to say, you know, all the typical coaching buzzwords, but I will say that when you turn on the tape, joy would be one, all right? That would be the number one thing that if you turn on the tape or you watching TV from wherever you may be watching from, to see the joy that these players have when they step on the field, the joy that they have when they're playing with one another, the comradery. That's the number one thing that we want to have on the defense. I think when you have, when you see joy out there, guys are playing selflessness, and you're seeing a team defense, and you're seeing guys who they don't care who makes the play long as someone makes the play, and they're willing to take on a double team or take this pick so that you can kind of clear up. And they're going to learn that the word sacrifice, although has a negative connotation, will be seen in different light. Meaning it's not what am I willing to give up? It's what I'm willing to do for. And having that mindset amongst the whole team will provide that joy. But outside of the joy, you want to see, you know, guys that are, you know, constantly attacking the football, creating takeaways. You want to see guys playing with some type of, some high IQ, some type of intelligence out there and communicating. So, but the joy is the number one thing that you want to see. I'm not going to use any other buzz words that, you know, trigger things, but joy would be the collective unit.”

**On how he will get the players to buy into what he's coaching:**

“Well, for them to buy into what I'm coaching, they have to one, buy into who I am as a person and that I genuinely have their best interest at heart. And how do they do that is for me, getting to know the person and not the player. That's me getting to know, again, their upbringing, how they got to where they are, the people that matter to them in life. That's me asking them about, ‘Hey, how's your mom? Or how's your loved one? Or How's your child? How did they do in that basketball game?’. And you start to develop that relationship. And when you develop that relationship, they realize that ‘You know what? He cares more than just if I make this play or not. He's really invested in me. And so, because he's invested in me, I can now become invested in him and what he's teaching and buying in.’ Because when you're dealing with, especially football players, or just any athlete or people in general, for me to listen to you, I have to be invested in you right? And there's no connection there with that. How hard is it? How willing am I to be where I need to be and do what I have to do if I don't feel like you really have my best interest at heart? And so, just starting, I think that's what the off season's about. It's a great opportunity to, you know, for them to get to know me, me get to know them. And I think being around Coach Quinn, you can get a sense of that, that he's a people's person. He's about relationships, the players that he's brought into this building, and the culture that he has. I'm just reliving, I'm just going through and fulfilling the vision that he's already set forth. That's all. I'm just moving to continue to move the needle that way

because he's already had the foundation of that in this building. And just the guys that I've met and just watching him interact with people.”

### **On bringing Minnesota Vikings Defensive Coordinator Brian Flores’ aggressive scheme to Washington:**

“Well, it's about what we do well if we have the players and their skill sets, some of the skill sets are to be aggressive. By nature, I'm an aggressive person by nature, just in the background. And not only with Brian Flores. His aggressiveness looks a little bit different than what it may have been in the past. But really, if you think about it, there's not much diff there aren't many differences between him and Mike Zimmer in terms of the aggression. It was just, you know, Zim was more third down aggression with Flo, it's more first, second, and third down, aggression, right? And it just looks differently. You know, Zim was more mug looks, whereas Flo is more all offsets. But there will be some incorporation of all that. I don't want to get too much in the Xs and Os, but we will try to dictate the terms and change the math. There's a buzzword for you [laugh], but we will use that just with our adaptability and versatile approach. But I think the way the players help shape that. So, it's all about players first and scheme second. And so based off what our players can do, we will do. If players can't do that, then we will do and put them in situations where they can be at their best. And so, yes, by nature, I'm an aggressive person. By nature, we want to become more aggressive in some way, shape, or form. Is that pressures, or is that just being more of attacking? Is that being more technique and fundamentals, attacking blocks, defeating blocks, tackling, and just doing the routine things routinely? That could also be seen as being aggressive as well, when you're just playing technique. And so, it's based off what we have player wise.”

### **On the strengths of the defense:**

“I would say young and athletic. I know there are some there's some older pieces there, but for the most part, especially the guys that we know we have in our system here, you look at the back end with, we're talking about Sainristil, [CB] Trey Amos, Quan Martin, Will Harris, you know, those guys are athletic. Then you throw in the [S Jeremy] Reaves in there as well, who provides some versatility, you know? And [S Tyler] Owens is also another guy who's versatile. You look at Magee, you look at Luvu, you look at [LB Kain] Medrano, those guys are athletic and they're young. You know, and up front you have some savvy vets up there. And then you have [DE Jer’Zhan] Newton, who's also a young player who has some mobility inside in the interior d-line. And so, when you look at that, the first thing that jumps off the tape is these guys can run and hit. And so, you definitely want to use that to where guys are going forward versus going backwards.”

### **On the types of players he wants to bring in:**

“One tough. Physical. Versatility. We talked about that and just with anything, our ability as a staff, our players' ability to be adaptable and whatever that may look like. Because when you're coming in and you may have a different vision of a certain player or you view versatility more than someone who, you know, is a first and second out, Mike linebacker, just all parties being versatile and being adaptable in that. And I think being on the same page, and I have a great feeling and sense that even in the hiring process when we're talking about position profiles, that their vision, the vision that we have as a collective unit and the vision that we have as a staff is on board with the same thing. So, we're aligned that way.”

### **On Washington’s game against the Minnesota Vikings this past season and if that was discussed in his interview:**

“We didn't discuss the 31 to nothing. Yeah, we didn't talk about that. But I will say it was just about, you know, it's just, again, it's about the joyous about the game. You know, any given Sunday. That was a very tough team to prepare for, you know, with, again, you know, with [WR] Terry [McLaurin] coming back that game, you had [QB] Jayden Daniels, you know, who can provide a lot of issues. It's a lot of issues that the offense can provide. And I'm looking forward to being a part of it this year. And, you know, me and [Offensive Coordinator] David [Blough], we have some history together when we're at Minnesota at the same time together. And so, it'll be fun to kind of just merge all this together and so that we can also have a successful year in 2026.”

**On maintaining experienced guys while getting younger as a team:**

“I think it's, you have to have a little bit of both. I think you can't go too far on either end of the spectrum. So, you know, you have to have some veterans to kind of balance those things out and help those guys come along, because those veterans can provide knowledge in various ways, right? It's not just on the field. It could be off the field. It could be ‘How do I study? How do I watch film? How do I become a pro?’. And so having veterans around, I think is a great piece. And the great thing is, and it's all speeds up the development of young players.”

**On how attending and coaching at a historically black college has shaped him:**

“It's the foundation of who I'm today. Having to attend and graduate from Morgan State University and then becoming, getting my first coordinating experience at Bowie State University. So, as you can see, the foundation of who I am and why relationships are so important to me is because those players that I've, that you come in across, come in contact with either coaching or playing with it's special and there's a bond that's there. And so, coming to Morgan State, it's, you know, it's not about the glitz and the glamor in terms of what some PWIs may be about, but you find a family atmosphere. You know, I learned that, you know, you miss a class that coach is going to be on you, like, ‘why did you miss this class?’. And, you know, that means something. And that helped build who I am today as a char in my character, because now I understand that, you know, what he cared. Those coaches that, that coached me at Morgan State, you know, they cared for me and they cared about my development, not just as a football player, but as a person, as a man, as a father, as a husband. They cared about that development. And I think that's what the HBCUs do. They help bridge that gap. They help provide the experiences of, yes, you're not alone. As you continue to grow and as you continue your journey, post high school and you learn a lot of different things going through those processes.”

**On what makes NFL offenses so hard to defend with how they continue to evolve:**

“Well, it's their blend. First of all, the quarterback play, right? The quarterback, it's the quarterback driven league and what you're starting to see is the blend of, let's say college football coming into the NFL. And it has been for a while. You're seeing less under center, two back downhill runs. You're seeing more spread open shotgun, you're seeing the influence, the QB run game. You're seeing that influence from college football. And what's happening is, unfortunately, there's some of, there's a large population of coaches in the NFL that hasn't been in college football in years, right? And the game is changing a little bit. And so now you're starting to visit in clinic with college coaches and say, ‘Hey, how do you stop this? How have you guys, what have you guys done with this particular scheme?’. And you see the crossover between NFL and college, but the game is becoming more dynamic. Everyone wants the points on the board. They're spreading it out. Defensively. We like to try to take advantage of the open, the spread looks. Hence the aggressiveness over there that he talked about earlier. But that's where the game is changing. It's more passing, it's a passing league. You know, it was good to kind of see a running back, get the

MVP in the Super Bowl, you know, that's kind of been unheard of lately. You know, it's been more quarterback driven and more ball in the air type of offenses.”

**On what he’s learned about himself during his coaching career:**

“Perseverance. The journey wasn't a typical journey. At 47 years old, this is my 26th year coaching, 16 in college, and my 10th year in the league. But perseverance, you know, not giving up, continue to move forward, push forward, be resilient, face adversity and success in the same light, I would say. You know, it's different. If you think back to, you know, when I was 26 years old, or really 23 years old, you know, sleeping in the car at 23 is different than sleeping in the car at 33, which I experienced both of those to try to strive to be where I'm today. So, perseverance and then trusting in God.”

**On his message to the defensive staff:**

“Definitely talked about being collaborative, having a collaborative input. I don't, we don't care where good ideas come from. You know, meeting the staff, you can feel it already, the juice, the building, the strong dynamics to be able to have some creativity in the room. Some dialogue in the room. Definitely have to have that. Open lines of communication. But you get a sense of, there's a lack of ego in the room, which is great. You can see that we have a staff of guys that can be at their best in the darkest of moments which you look for. But you also, you're seeing teachers and you're seeing communicators, you're seeing a certain sense of humility in there, and you see their character really come to light. And I think with all that, that's a great environment where things can grow and we can bring this all and we can make it all come to life in terms of our vision that we have amongst the defense and for the organization as a whole under Coach Quinn.”

**On his family’s reaction to his new role and battling through adversity:**

“So, for the family, all my family is still here. They're all from the area here. So, they were ecstatic [laugh] about me coming back. And, you know, I haven't had a chance to really, you miss a lot of family functions, you know, when you're away, which is good. My grandparents are still here. They're still alive, so I get a chance to continue to spend time with them and my mom and my aunt and uncles. You know, my wife, she lives in the area, but she's from the Bay Area, and so she works, her firm is here, located in the Washington DC area. So, it's always good to just kind of comeback full circle with that. In terms of the homeless question or, you know, sleeping in a car again, it's what you willing to, not what you're willing to give up, but it's what you're willing to do. And so, it was tough, you know, but there was ultimate goal of getting to the highest level at that particular time. And, you know, when you're a young person and you're single and you're not married, you have a mindset that no one can outwork you. You don't have a wife or a kid to go home to. And so, when I was younger and growing up in the profession, and you know, after going through the challenges and different things that you've gone through, you have to pay your dues. And no one tells you what those dues look like but when you're out there and you want something that you want to accomplish, what's holding you back? You have to choose your hard. So, it's either the hards of failures or the hards of success. You know, you can be hard and you know, I'm sleeping in my car and it's hard or [laugh], you know, I can have it the easy way, right? And now I got to face the hard of how do I handle success, you know, if it comes too early. And so, you got to pick your battles and understand that you know, you trust in God and you pray. And he will never lead you astray. So that's what I did.”