



Head Coach Dan Quinn

Opening Statement:

“Let's get rolling. First thing I thought was it was good to see the rookies. I really enjoy the preseason. We put so much time into the development side with these guys, so when I get a chance to watch them play, man, it's something that I love every year of going for it. They come in early, extra time, extra walkthroughs at night just to put themselves in a position where they can go compete and do their thing. And so, first action for them, it's a big deal. It's never lost on me. I love that. As far as the turnover margin, anytime we're in plus two, that's something that I'm always looking for. It's part of our philosophy about the ball. Then I think lastly, it was good to be back here in front of the fans. We're gonna be on the road for a few weeks, so I felt them and that was cool.”

On if he has an update on QB Marcus Mariota:

“I don't. I know we're connecting on Sunday, so I'll give an update on Marcus and some of the other guys that we've talked about who could and couldn't be back. Maybe it's [TE John] Bates and [C] Nick [Allegretti] and some of the other guys. So, we'll evaluate the guys tomorrow and I'll have a good sense for what's ahead for the week. We're still in camp mode, so I'll try to give you the best updates I can.”

On LB Sonny Styles and RB Robert Henry Jr:

“So I was just visiting with Sonny outside, and it was like having a little sip today, just got a taste of what it's like and how to go. I wasn't pleased defensively on the first drive. I just felt like it was slow going there. And then I thought they got their feet underneath them and got going. But on both sides, we started a little slower than I would've liked. And then I thought the teams got rolling from there and there was a lot of battling back and forth. But Sonny, I expect good technique, good speed, and those are the things that he's demonstrated so far in camp. And as far as Robert goes, he and [RB] Kaytron [Allen] both, I thought, had a nice night. Also, for [RB] Jerome Ford [who] went out, we had three backs for the game. When Jerome was out, there was really no flinch from these guys, playing on teams, returning. That was a good sign. I felt the outside stuff with Rob. It was kind of cool to see both these guys, with Kaytron finishing the game with the first down and a touchdown towards the end. Those are the physical style runs we'd expect from him.”

On his evaluation of individuals versus combinations of players during the preseason:

“First individually to say, okay, skill-wise, where it's at, where does it go? I think what you're referring to and what I would call is like when do roles start to develop into packages into going? So, for instance, we saw [S Tyler] Owens playing some nickel. You're seeing who can have some designated pass rush, interior wise, who's got strength. Those are the things I look for. Sometimes even in these games there's a little bit more man-to-man just to say what does that look like to find out? We did it a little bit in the practice and even a little bit in the game, but it's an important piece. It's not game planned, any of it, but there is some evaluation to go. To answer your question, a little bit of both. But I do look for the individual skill first and then based on that, what would that role

look like and how would we feature the guys together? Even at the running back spot today, in tandem, how did we use them? What did that look like? So, a little bit of both.”

On S Quan Martin and S Will Harris:

“I was really pleased to see Quan from the ball. I knew that's something that he can get to places due to his speed and athletic ability to get to it. I was pleased with that. Will's got size to thump and tackle, so we wanted to give them some extended time. It may switch a little bit in the next game. We're fortunate at that position that we're deep. So, it may not be the same next week in terms of how we'd go. But for today, that was the plan to say, we held Reavo [S Jeremy Reaves] and [S] Nick [Cross], and then next week they'll be playing. How does that change? What does that look like? So, by design, for sure. But it's a good problem. That's not a problem at all.”

On OC David Blough and DC Daronte Jones:

“I felt both guys felt really prepared going into it in terms of what it looks like. There'll be things to communicate differently, headsets, how does it go? But both of them really felt in control. I was listening a lot tonight just to see how the communication goes. Calls, how in on time and packages. It actually can be difficult in the preseason because you're not game planning and, ‘Okay, this is what I wanna feature on this third down. This is what they like to do.’ I thought both guys, I'd give them high remarks for starting us off. Good collaboration from the coaches too.”

On how important learning throughout the game is for the rookies:

“It's a big deal. And earlier in the day, we said if it's 50 plays for you, we'd expect relentlessness as a part of our identity. If it's 25 plays and your shoulder pads may come off at the half, then it would be that 25 relentless and then unbelievable support. And if you're playing no plays, demonstrating for the guys in the fight what kind of support they could have. So, I was happy to see that. I'm not surprised, but it was cool to see that. They wanted to see these guys have success. When there was a big play to be made, there was a lot of excitement on the sidelines. I felt it from the crowd, but I also felt it from the sidelines. Tonight was hard. There were some ties they had to battle through, being gassed when I pull people and other guys get opportunities. But it's also part of the fun of preseason.”

On seeing more competition from the offensive line:

“I thought, going into it, talking to these guys, and also [DT] Byron [Coward] at defensive tackle, I said, ‘Man, we're looking for some dependable men that can raise the standard.’ And I thought they did that. And so, on the interception, I think it might have been [LB] Ale Kaho at the end, I thought Byron had good push. But adding [G] Max [Scharping] and [C] Trey [Hill] and [C] Nick [Brunskill] into the group, it's felt good to have them part of it and getting going. And I would say as we're moving forward they'll even get more, as we're moving forward. But they're off to a good start.”

On RB Kaytron Allen being assessed more in a game versus during practice due to the physicality of his play style:

“Yeah, it's fair because it's kind of like a bigger back, you know? And so, in practice, ‘Would he have got stopped there? Would have been more?’ It's kind of like in practice a couple years ago with Jayden, like, would he have been sacked or not? And he would not have been. But a little bit of that with Kaytron. In practice, we're not tackling to the ground, so would he be able to get yards after the hit? And so, I'll be anxious to see what does that look like after the contact? But I liked the backs. They're in shape. They were focused. They were ready. And like I said, when they came out to be a little shorthanded, there was no flinch. And that was a good sign to me.”

On Kaho's performance tonight:

"Yeah. When Ale came in he was a signal caller. And so that part has been something that he's been growing in. We didn't do that much in his first season. He's always had a good impact on special teams in his first year, but what you're seeing this year, he's grown. The habits, the practice, the techniques. He's always been a tough competitor. But to see him evolve and grow, that's why I named him the special team's captain for tonight. I thought with [TE Colson] Yankoff and [DT] JZ [Jer'Zhan Newton] and Ale, like, these are two guys that we said, 'Could they come back in crazy shape? Could they come back to compete?' And the three of them have really established, like, 'Hey, man, I'm here to fight.' And I really respect that about him."

On the first defensive drive:

"So, early on, I thought just in the run game it felt like they were moving yards after contact. Didn't love how the pass rush to affect [Miami Dolphins QB Malik] Willis into that space. So, although we started slowly, I thought we picked up steam after that. But as far as a first drive goes to take it all the way down the field, because kicking off, I think they might have muffed the catch to go, and then to have a long drive – I wanted to find out their resilience and fight. And so, to see them come back and get stops after that, I was pleased. But I just thought we needed to start a little more aggressively. Not from a play calling standpoint, just like, how we play."

On QB Athan Kaliakmanis' performance:

"You know, coming in, I was pleased to see him in the chaos. And so, I thought both quarterbacks did a nice job at the end of the half. It's not something that's gonna show up on the stat sheet, but [QB] Sam [Hartman] using a lot of the clock, two-minute at the end of the first half. We were able to get in and so using that clock so they don't have another opportunity, knowing that we were gonna get the ball to start the second half. And then, for Athan to see him communicate and then also be at the end of the game, using the clock in a four minute, anytime you can basically end the half with the ball, you know, to get points and end the game with it, that's a big deal. And the quarterback has a big responsibility in that, using the clock. I didn't use timeouts until it got to a certain spot. So, he felt calm in the space tonight. I'll be looking forward to watching him. I thought you'd see his arm strength come out a little bit, and it did, on some of the play action passes. Both probably had a couple throws they'd like to have back. Sam had an interception and one that could have been. AK on a sack that needed to be a throwaway to cause the longer yards. Those are learning lessons that they need. And I knew coming in that there would be mistakes. But I also recognized, like, how do you learn from them? How do you grow? And that's what I'm looking to see from he and Sam as we're going, like, when the mistakes happen, are they repeated? Do they grow? But I thought [Defensive Coordinator Daronte] DJ [Jones] did a nice job getting the guys ready into that spot. Obviously, they didn't wanna see [QB] Marcus [Mariota] leave earlier but Sam, I thought was ready for the moment and made a couple good throws and some conversions that we needed at that time after a long drive to go down and score against us."

RB Robert Henry Jr.**On how he feels about the game:**

"I feel great. There's much more to improve, but overall I feel great."

On what he needs to improve on after tonight's performance:

"Just going back to when I was watching film on the tablet during the game. Did some runs I could have made, bigger runs. Some blocks I could have made better, but I'm still progressing."

On working with Running Backs Coach Anthony Lynn and what he is learning from him:

"You know, he's been a coach for a long time, so just him critiquing me on reading the whole defense before the play starts. That can go a long way because before the play snaps, if you read the defense, you know exactly where the ball's going or which linebacker is blitzing or which gap you got to read."

On his first experience playing in the stadium:

"It feels great. The environment was different, on a bigger stage. And I just soaked it all in and gave it my all."

On the encouragement from the veterans during the game:

"Just keep on running. Mostly it's going to bust. I took their words and I just kept running, and the holes were definitely opening it up."

On his role as a return specialist:

"So I've been doing returns since I was in high school. But when I got to college, I did it too. But I was actually playing, so they would never put me back there. But I've been working there I'd say my whole football career. So when my name's called out to go, I'm ready."

On the biggest thing he was able to show out tonight:

"The way I move, for sure. I feel like I'm gonna be able to express that more throughout the season, but definitely the way I move. I feel like I'm twitchy, I got speed."

On when he felt comfortable:

"I'd say, after the first play, I definitely felt comfortable because I got my first hit off, and I just felt like I was supposed to be there."

QB Sam Hartman

On how it felt to get back out there:

"It was good. It's always a cool opportunity to suit up. Not many other things in the world you can be doing at this point in your life. It was not the way I wanted to go in there. I am obviously thinking of [QB] Marcus [Mariota]."

On what a preseason game is all about:

"I think it's everything. It's my opportunity to go out there and show what I have and what I can do. And just to continue and try to work and grow my game. The reps are limited, the opportunities are limited, especially at this level as a quarterback three and quarterback four. So, just continuing to try and take every rep, grow from it, learn from it, protect the ball, and put together some drives. It was the first time I got a scoring drive in a long time, so it was good to do that. We have a lot to work on, and a lot to grow on, but we have a great group of guys."

QB Athan Kaliakmanis

On how he was able to show confidence in his first preseason game:

“Yeah, I think my preparation, and then just the reps that we’ve taken with the guys. The work that I’ve been doing outside of practice, the work that I’ve been doing in practice, when I’m not getting those reps. Just the work that I have been putting in, it’s giving me confidence for sure.”

On the feeling after his first completion:

“It was incredible. I wasn’t really thinking about my first completion. I was kind of in the zone, but it was just a blessing to walk out there, see all the Commanders’ fans, and see that field. It was like, ‘wow, this is real life. This is my life. It’s amazing. It’s beautiful’. I love it and I’m just appreciative for every one of the guys in here.”

On how he would evaluate his performance:

“Yeah, I think there were some good, there was some bad. I think I could learn from the two sacks. The tipped balls, I know for sure one of them I was late on a read, so that got tipped. And then the two sacks, I could avoid those whether it is throwing it away, knowing the situation, don’t want to lose that many yards. Third and 20 is kind of harder. Second and 20, whatever. I don’t remember what it was, but those things are kind of hard to get out of. Just avoiding those situations with an easy throwaway or just stepping up, throwing on time, whatever the case may be.”

On the rookie class’ overall performance tonight:

“I thought the [running] backs did outstanding. I think that’s the same way with the receivers. The defense, I think there were three picks for the defense today. They played lights out too. We have a really special class. I think a lot of guys in this class are connected. The team is connected. And that speaks to the veterans. They have done nothing but help us. And we are just really appreciative of the veterans here. It says something about the leadership here in this program, from the top [to the] bottom. The rookies are very connected. They’re connected with the team. We just got welcomed in here and we’re very thankful for that.”

On finally getting out and playing in live game action:

“Oh man, right now the thing I’m thinking about is how appreciative I am of [QBs] Sam [Hartman], Marcus [Mariota], and Jayden [Daniels] because I went in there and they didn’t have to help me. They didn’t have to stay with me. They didn’t have to do extra walk-throughs with me. They didn’t have to sit in meetings and answer my questions. [QBs] Sam [Hatman] did that, Marcus [Mariota] did that, and Jayden [Daniels] did that, so it speaks a lot. It speaks a lot about the team and the veterans from the top down. Because I feel like this is home for me and I felt like that the second I walked in. And the QB room I can’t say enough about it. They’ve been nothing but helpful towards me they’ve helped everything when I needed it even during practice, so I really appreciate that.”

On the love from the Commanders fans:

“Right now it’s just to keep everything internal, to stay where my feet are and not get caught up into anything. It’s very easy to do that as a human. To get caught up in human nature and things are going really good. One thing I’ve learned is it’s never as good as you think it is, and it’s never as bad as you think it is. It’s always staying level minded, going back and watching the tape. And I’m the type of guy, all I’m thinking about is my bad plays right now, the plays where I could have been on time, the plays where I took the sacks. Can’t take the sacks, gotta play on time, [and] learn from those mistakes. I can’t wait for next week.”

On harnessing restless energy to make plays:

"I think it just goes into your preparation. Having confidence in your preparation, knowing that I don't need to be a superhero today. I just need to trust the gameplan. I need to trust my teammates and go out there and execute."

On if any coach or player gave him a message right before going into the game:

"Oh yeah, the [QBs] Jayden [Daniels], Sam [Hartman], Marcus [Mariota]. The coaches were telling us all week 'man, take it in'. But for me personally, it was really the QBs. Sam, Marcus, and Jayden, I can't speak enough about them and their character. For people to achieve what they've achieved in their lives, and to help me, from the day I walked in, it's really awesome. And it says a lot about their leadership. It says a lot about them as people, as characters. I'm just super grateful for the QB room."

On if he felt he got to show off a little bit of arm strength:

"Not yet, it's coming though. Not yet, but it's coming."

S Quan Martin

On the interception:

"It felt good, man. Just coming out and just playing fast. Reading the quarterback, where he took me, and just made a play on the ball."

On building momentum as a defense:

"I think the joint practice really just set the standard for where we see this team going, this defense going. Just saying that's the floor for us. Just keep stacking days, man, just getting better every opportunity."

On his thoughts on the secondary:

"I just see guys playing fast, man. Despite what happened the plays before, the guys just had a short-term memory and just went out there and kept playing. They were resilient, and they just played together as a group."

On the defense's focus on forcing turnovers:

"Oh, yeah, man. That's all we talk about. Ball is life. We've just been working out all throughout OTAs [Organized Team Activities]. It really started during OTAs, man, when we first got the opportunity. So, just to carry that out all through camp, just try to get the ball any way possible: punch, rip out, interception. Just to give our offense another opportunity."

On communication between the secondary and linebackers:

"I mean, I think it's definitely always a phase to get better at, especially while we're in preseason. So just going out there, man, just playing fast, and just communicating as much as possible. But I definitely think we can improve, and just keep stacking it and getting better."

On getting an interception that counted:

"Yeah, no, it was good, man. Just to not have a penalty on that one. I think last year I had a few of them, and they all got called back. So it was good just to have one that counts."

On bouncing back from last season:

"Just being resilient, man. I think in this profession, in life, I think we all kind of go through some things, but it's all about our response, man. I think I responded great, and I just kind of know what I wanted out of this season, and now I just wanna have an impact on the team. So, wherever that may be, I'm just gonna continue to go out there and just play hard. And leave no doubt."

On shifting his focus from last season to this season:

"Yeah, man, I think it was definitely hard, especially ending the season the way we did. Just trying to focus on me first, just mentally. Then physically just get my body right, and just control the things I can. And that's my effort, my play style, getting to the ball, whatever it may be. Anything I control, I'm going to control it. And anything that's outside of my control, man, I just don't worry about it too much."

On his growth since last season:

"Not really. I think it's just getting better, understanding the game a lot more, and just being myself, man. I think that's pretty much it."

On how the defense suits his playing style:

"I love the defense, honestly. Especially with the guys that we have out there, man. The defensive line, we know they're gonna get out to the quarterback. So, they'll put a lot more pressure on the quarterback, and that just allowed me to group myself, just to go out there and make plays on the ball."

RB Kaytron Allen

On his performance tonight:

"I feel like it was good. I started off a little slow, but I can be better. But first game, man. But I just feel like I can be better, but it was a great start."

On how his performance as the game went on:

"I feel like when [RB Robert] Rob [Henry] started getting all around, I feel like he got me going. So, I appreciate that. And see him get going, it just made me get going."

On putting pressure on himself:

"Just going there, I got another snap. I have to go to the next and be better. Don't worry about what happened last. So just trying to get better throughout the game."

On the running back room:

"We got a great running back room. Everybody is good at different things, but everybody helps each other. You're only as good as everybody in the room, so we have to help each other out for sure."

On being tackled out there:

"It was nice. I'm glad I was out here. Work things out, and I was blessed to be out here and play in the game."

On interior running:

"I feel like that just got me going, on contact. I love contact. So it definitely gets me going for sure."

On big moments and his NFL debut:

"I'm just excited. I gotta thank God, man, just to be here. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else but here. I'm just grateful, man. I just love that I am a Washington Commander. I'm gonna enjoy it, man. Enjoy every last moment. Like I said, I can be better, but I'm just blessed that I even got to play in the game, so I know I will be better."

On self-pep talk before tonight:

"One play at a time. That's it, for real. Everything else would be what it is, over that time, and I am just trying to get the dub for my team."

On excitement between him and RB Robert Henry Jr.:

"It was exciting. We both talked about it before it even happened. So, I was doing it and that's my dog, man. I see him score, I know I had to score just because he scored and he just got me going. Rob had a great game. Proud of him."

On the speed of the NFL compared to college:

"Oh, it's for sure different. It's different. I feel like I got adjusted as the game went on, but I'm glad I got this opportunity to plan this first preseason game. I know where to move with that game."