

WASHINGTON COMMANDERS

HEAD COACH DAN QUINN

Opening Statement: “I kind of talked a little bit about what I discussed with the team. It does not matter who is or is not playing – what we saw tonight simply was not good enough. What makes this even harder is knowing what the next couple days look like and making tough decisions with [general manager] ‘AP’ [Adam Peters] that are best for our team without losing sight of the weight of it. It is a big deal. So, that is what the next couple days for us will look like – going through the roster. Obviously, we have all of training camp to go through the evaluation and get to where we are at, but it is a big deal. I was definitely not pleased with what we saw tonight, for sure.”

What was the biggest thing you were not seeing? “I just thought that we looked [like we were] without a lot of energy and juice to go for it. Right from the long drive start, we turned it over, did not get going – so I just thought we looked without the energy and the speed to go finish on it, and that is what I saw a lot of tonight. I did not see urgency of sprinting and coming off the ball and flying, and I wanted to see more of that for sure.”

Outside of tonight, how did you feel overall about training camp for you guys, as a whole? “Yes. I honestly thought these guys have thrown a really good training camp. We talked all the way back – I think from the very beginning – could they come in, in ridiculously good shape, and they did that. So, it was a tough camp, and that was by intention – knowing that the way we want to start, having the resiliency early on and even going through some of the bumps and bruises of those strains that go in, not counting ‘LT’ [Laremy Tunsil] or ‘Johnny’ [Jer’Zhun Newton], but I am talking about normal training camp issues. But I loved the competition that they did. I loved the connection that the team has built. And that is what makes the next couple days difficult into that spot. But we got a lot of reps and a lot of competition in a number of spots, and so I am pleased with the camp. I am not pleased with this being the exclamation at the end of camp, because tonight was not indicative of what many of you have seen over the last six weeks. So, that pissed me off, to be quite honest. But they have really thrown themselves a hell of a camp. That is why I was disappointed to have the finish like tonight.”

You preach so much on competition, and a lot of these guys might be backups or maybe they are not even going to be here, but does that still bother you? Is there something bigger than just that group that carries into the season? “Yes. And I think that is the underlying theme of who we want to be, obviously competing, and they just looked like they did not have anything to throw into the pile for it. And so, that is disappointing to me, because I was proud of the camp that these guys have thrown. There are a lot of guys that are in great shape, good timing, good space to hit, and so to see sloppy play into that, that was just disappointing.”

You have to make those decisions by Sunday. How do you balance the success you have seen from them in camp but also tonight's poor effort when it comes down to these guys trying to make the roster? "Yes, you want to look at the entire body of work for every player; where they are at, what they have done. You see players develop even during camp, and the first one that comes to mind is probably Antonio [Williams]. To see improvement for him, that is what you want to see – as they are gaining confidence, they are gaining [experience] going against different players, you think 'Alright, what are the things that I can do and bring to the team?' And so, he is just maybe one that sticks out to me that they are going to keep improving. And so, seeing guys like him make their mark – that is a good sign to me. But there were a number of guys in that spot, so we use the whole body of work. And really, that is what is nice about working with [general manager] Adam [Peters] – we talk about the team every day. And so, he has a good handle from when we started, not just through tonight."

We did not talk to you after the joint practice the other day. Were you happy with that, with seeing a lot of ones and twos? "I liked the work, honestly. There is a lot about the joint practice – going through the practice – I liked how the team finished at the end. There were things about when you go through a two-minute scenario, so that was good. We saw when 'JD' [Jayden Daniels] finished on a blitz and Antonio [Williams] – there was a stop by [Mike] 'Mikey' [Sainristil]. So, you have heard me speak a lot about the situations. Going through the tape, there was a lot that I liked about the one-on-one and the seven-on-seven. When you are going back and forth, it can be a lot to see at a joint practice, so I liked seeing the tape. I think every player there would say, 'I want to do this better. I want to do this better.' We kind of did an exercise – even the other night, [we asked], 'Who is somebody on the team that helped you get stronger?' And so, we just kind of talked about how we want to play and the things that we want to see. And so, there were things I liked, things I did not – not completely different from other days. We put a couple guys in different locations, but that is part of it, too. We had planned to play Julien [Good-Jones] some at guard – he has been at center a lot – and Matt [Gulbin] went inside, and Sam [Cosmi] was sick. That was part of, that was not part of the plan with Sam being sick, obviously – but just putting guys in different spots. We put Amik [Robertson] at nickel – you saw different combinations of things, and that is what you do at a joint practice – try to find different matchups and different looks. And so, you do not gameplan, but you just kind of put them into spots and say, 'Alright, what does that look like?' And that is important."

Do you have a good sense of where your line is at, given C Nick Allegretti not being in there? "I have a sense of where it is at today. We will see more in the next week and then into the following one. Like I said, with Nick [Allegretti], obviously not getting a lot of work so far. That is for sure probably the biggest unknown."

There were other guys that have been in and out that you are confident are going to be able to play next week? "I will give you a better sense – a number of them did not come on the trip and did rehab and stuff back at home, so that can be a better call for Monday. And for sure, some will get into the work this week and then the following week will get back."

But I do not have an update tonight on who I am most ready [to discuss], but I will Monday have a little better idea.”

The decision to have WR Dyami Brown not play and WR Luke

McCaffrey play, CB Fabian Moreau not play and CB Antonio Hamilton Sr. play – how

should we interpret those choices? “I would say – yes, very tricky to interpret. We did a lot on how much a guy did even, at the practice. And so, some of them I really tried to push as much as I could, almost like a game. That was probably Sonny [Styles] and Frankie [Luvu], and Jayden [Daniels] played some 56 snaps and 45. So, I was like, ‘Let’s push them far.’ Some of the hardest times for a player is, not just playing fast in regular season, but the volume of plays that you play. Sometimes you go from 20, 25 and 30 in a practice, all of a sudden, to a lot. So, part of the design of our camp was that we were going to push some guys further than we have before. And so, that was part of it, and then others tonight – you probably saw they had a, ‘Hey, let us take about these 10 plays.’ It was good to get Tim Settle back in. He had not played since being injured, and so that was good for him to get into the routine, get going. We did not have a lot planned for him, but that would be an example of sometimes it is just a small sample size to get rolling on that. Others tonight was even special teams-oriented – a player might not play a lot on offense or defense, but we are going to feature them on special teams. Some good, some not so good.”

You talked about increased competition throughout camp, and I think we saw that, but since that Detroit game which you were unhappy about, have you noticed the juice waning over the last week?

“No. There are parts of the practice the other day that I did not like, and there are also parts that I did. So, I thought going into that – I knew it was going to be a good team to come practice against, so I was pleased with that. I was more disappointed – I felt flat from the start tonight, honestly, I did. And that is not what you want. There are guys really wanting to make your mark and establish – this is your last chance to [show] – ‘This is what my best looks like.’ And I was hoping to see more of that. But no, as far as the team – yes, they are tired. It has been a tough camp, and they will come back from that for sure, but that is no excuse for not having good energy to go play, especially when there is a lot on [the line] for a lot of the guys.”

You would agree that the start of camp, obviously things would be different at the end of camp – you have a better look of where you were. So, over the whole course of it, what do you think the build was in terms of where you wanted, and where is it built in terms of what still is to sort of come?

“Yes, that is an awesome question. I think what also happens now that ties into the build – when you go and you put a lot in offensively and defensively, you want to say, ‘OK, more of that and less of that.’ Now you get to do that from the staff. You want to have a big volume at the start, and now we can say features, role, packages – so it will now decrease, naturally get into a gameplan [of] what it looks like. But I would say there were still, with the volume of packages, there were still errors. And so, I think you always want execution to be high on your list, even in camp. But when you are in and out of calls – that is probably the most challenging piece.

And so, how do we continue to work on the execution to make it clean in practice and in the games? We have had penalties, that was knocking down the drives. I liked in the camp that oftentimes we had – call it, so if there was a foul, it went to the resulting second-and-15, because this did not need to be second-and-15. A good 10-yard pass play on second [down] still leaves you in third down. And so, those were kind of the lessons that we tried to instill. But I do really like the battles that were back and forth in camp. I thought that just stuck out to me in such a good way. And that is why seeing tonight makes it even harder – it was under my skin early.”

When you want to see the best out of your guys, this is the last chance before Sunday, and you wanted to see more. Why don't you think you got to see that? “I do not know. I wish I had a better sense for it. Going into it, you want to put your best foot forward and get to there and obviously have a plan to go there. We got right behind and did not get any momentum going, but I don't have a good reason. You do not want to wait until the next day to make a change, looking at the tape. Those are course corrects right now. If there was a major issue to go – but any time you turn the ball over early, those kind of things, not get any momentum – all of that contributes. I think I spoke to you guys after Detroit, I did not like the complementary football. Tonight, I just did not like it. It simply was not good enough. It was not a [matter] of here to here – it just simply was not up to our standard.”

Talking about the process of maybe adding players on cut-down day – you wait for other teams. Pre-draft, you get reports from scouts on who they might be looking at, but during training camp, you are obviously so focused on what you guys are doing. How much time do you get to maybe look at some of these other guys that the front office anticipates might be available? “Yes, I do not, but I know a guy who does [in general manager Adam Peters].” (*Laughter*) “And he does a really good job at that. We talk about the team a lot. ‘What stressors are there for you?’ He does a good job asking me what is there. We talk about the guys a lot – in fact, we did it again this morning, we did it after lunch, [and] we did it yesterday. So, it is just ongoing to have discussions. And that is the good part about when you are going through personnel decisions – free agency time, draft time, this time – there are so many back-and-forths that you go through. This one just happens so quickly. The other one, there is just [a] long ramp-up, and we are all waiting for free agency, we are all waiting for the draft, and then this one goes like ‘whoosh.’ So, it is kind of up my alley, really – to make quick decisions. But fortunately, [general manager] Adam [Peters] is on top of that, and we have had some battles that are with our own team – man, this will be hard.”

You talked about having a good competitive camp, and the results have not shown as much on the field in these preseason games. As you head to two weeks from the start of the season, how do you turn that around, or do you have to look at how you were doing things to try and make adjustments so that the guys are ready for Week 1? “Yes, they are ready. And I do not base it on the outcomes of a mix-and-match [of] people here and there. I just have a longer view – who is together, what I am seeing every day. I am

seeing who is getting in the extra [work] together – you see guys like ‘J’ [Jayden Daniels] and Terry [McLaurin] and ‘Stef’ [Stefon Diggs] over and over to get it exactly like we want it. So, I have seen that with the tight ends – with John [Bates] and Chig [Okonkwo] and their combinations of things – different people in the O-line. We still have work to do there, obviously, to get the right combination, the right people. But there is a lot that I like that I have seen – not indicative of [tonight]. I just want to make sure the playstyle is always to a standard that I am pleased with, and tonight was not the case.”

QB SAM HARTMAN

What do you take from this game and preseason overall? “It is a disappointing end to what I felt like [was] a really productive and good preseason. Obviously, [it's] not something you want to have out there on tape as a team [or] as a player. It starts with the quarterback position — it starts with myself when we are out there executing calls, making sure the balls get to where [they are] supposed to be. It was just a disappointing end to [what] I felt like [was] really probably one of our better preseasons since I have been here.”

Could you just feel something was off on the sidelines at all tonight? “No, not really. I think we will be able to go back and watch the tape and point at different things, different plays, different moments. I have tons in my head where the ball should have gone somewhere or it did not quite get the placement that I wanted to. That is kind of a part of it, and you roll with the punches. But overall, preseason felt like a really big step for us as a team, and [it] kind of felt a little bit like a step back today.”

What did you see over the course of the preseason that you thought was positive that you can build toward the season? “Connection. We really wanted to push that as a team. ‘DQ’ [head coach Dan Quinn] kind of talked about that a lot in competition. You felt like every room had elevated themselves in such a great way, whether it is the quarterback room, us all competing together, whether it is the receiver room, the DB room, safeties. All throughout camp, it was just competition, whether it was early in the morning or at practice or in the afternoon — it was just always about competing, and I felt like that was something we really did very well.”

Tonight notwithstanding, how do you feel that you guys have developed in terms of learning the new system over the course of the last few months? “It's a credit to [offensive coordinator David] Blough. We started early, in late May, I think, if my dates are correct. It is like — we kind of created a sculpture. You get the marble, and you just start hacking away, you try and create something that is beautiful. Obviously, we are still hacking away right now, but a credit to the coaching staff — they work incredibly hard [from] top to bottom. We just have to go out there and execute as a team. It always starts with the quarterback, and it always starts with me. I can look at the tape and say, ‘If I do this a little better, then we probably do not have such a bad day.’”

In what ways was this offseason and preseason different than last year, or was it? “No, I think it definitely was different. Obviously, you have a new kind of person at the helm for us at offense, so you are kind of learning a different route [and] a different way to do things. Obviously, the first two years for me were similar, and then you are coming into this — you are a little older; you are a little wiser. Again, it is always a competition mindset — you are always trying to compete for something. At the end of the day, I am blessed to be able to play the game that I love, and you do not know how many opportunities you will get at the end of the day. There is something important and something really special about putting on the 'W' for this city and this team and this organization, and so it is always about trying to continue to be able to do that in whatever capacity it may be. I think as a team, we put in a lot of work, and obviously it did not really show up today, but I do not think there are many doubts in our mind that we are going to come back from this and learn and grow and continue to go.”

In that vein, with Sunday coming up, where is your head at? “Oh, man. You never know. I think everybody in the world has their opinion on what is what and what is not. I work really hard, and this team worked really hard. Whatever it is, it is — I am proud of the work that we put in as a group. It was really cool to kind of go out there with those guys, for whatever that time may be — the Nick Nashes, the ‘JBs’ [Jaden Bradley], the Lawrence Cagers — where you are having to tell Lawrence Cager, ‘You cannot go out — we do not have anybody else to go.’ Those kind of moments — that is what makes this game so special, that is what makes playing for this team so special. And again, the scoreboard did not reflect any positivity in any way, but I will always hold on to those moments of like — that is why you play the game, and that is why you work hard.”

You have been on this journey with QB Jayden Daniels side by side the last three years. What have you kind of noticed about his journey, your differences over the last couple years, and what has it been like to have him alongside you? “It has been cool. I think our relationship obviously is one of those that people know. We are boys, and we have been boys for a long time. I probably met [Jayden Daniels] in 2021, when he had recently made the transfer. I think he has a special ability [where] no moment really ever feels too big. I wish I had a little bit more of that in me. It is very cool — there is a lot of attention, there are a lot of eyes, there are a lot of voices that are telling him what is right and wrong, and he handles it in such a cool way that every day, getting to go in — you are never getting a different Jayden. You are getting ‘J5,’ or whatever you want to call him. It is an honor to call him a teammate and a friend. I am really excited for him, and again, his play speaks for itself — like, he does stuff that I do not even dream of. I do not really try and emulate him on the field — maybe I run around a little bit — but it is always fun to see what he can do and what he does with his football talents. And then who he is as a person throughout a locker room — I think everybody can emulate that.”

WR VAN JEFFERSON

How would you evaluate today? “I think from everybody, I think we can play a lot better. I think a lot of people will say they can play a lot better. It's just the way football goes, though. Some days you are not going to have your best days, and other days you just get back in the lab and correct the mistakes. So, that is all you can do.”

With the Detroit Lions joint practice done, is there a concern or a hope that there are correctable things and that this team, 16 days from now against the Philadelphia Eagles, will be ready to go? “Everything is correctable. If you have the mindset to just come back better, you can correct it. So, I think we have a lot of guys on this team [where] that is their mindset. We will be back better, yes, for sure.”

From your perspective, how much of the offense has been shown in the preseason? “Yes, I think [offensive coordinator] Coach [David] Blough is calling stuff he wants to call, and once Week 1 comes, he will do a lot more. But at the same time, he is just trying to get through the basic things people know. [We] just have to get down the basics.”

QB ATHAN KALIAKMANIS

What do you feel about tonight's game overall? “Yes, I think tonight was not the standard of Washington Commanders football. I think from start to finish, execution-wise, as a team, it was not good enough, and that starts with me. Tonight I started the game — it starts with the quarterback. I have to be better. I have to be better.”

Knowing what is ahead in a couple days with roster cuts, what is sort of the temperature in there? I know it is fresh off a loss, but just sort of what is this like for you guys? “Yes, I am not even thinking about that right now. I am just — I am really hurt. I am really competitive, and losing like that stings — it hurts. It will be a rough sleep for sure. I am going to watch the film. But, I have to come out better. I have to play better. I am not thinking about that stuff. God will take care of that for me. But, I am thinking about tonight's game. I want to learn from my mistakes. I want to see what went well, because it is never as bad as you think it is and it is never as good as you think it is. There is a lot to learn for sure, and we just have to learn. We have to learn from those mistakes and then keep attacking every single day, and that is exactly what this team is going to do tomorrow, because that is who we are.”

Did you feel there was just a lack of energy or anything out there tonight? “I just think that we just need to be better. I think that starts with me, the quarterback. I went out, and I started the game today. We need to execute. We only put up 3 points. I played a half, and I did not put up any. So, that ultimately starts with me.”

How does the speed of the game feel to you when you get in these actual preseason games? “I think I am comfortable in it. I think I am adjusting to it. At first it was fast, you know, when I came here in May it was fast. But throughout the games, I felt really prepared.

I felt comfortable. I made some mistakes, for sure. [There's] stuff to learn from, and I am learning — I am learning. There is still a lot for me to learn, of course. But I think I am growing, and I think that is the important part. But it is not about me — it is about the team. If the team is growing — that is all that matters.”

What was sort of the message from head coach Dan Quinn after the game? “Yes, [that it] just was not the standard, and that is the bottom line. It was not the standard.”

This is two weeks in a row head coach Dan Quinn has kind of talked about — well, he has not talked to us yet — but lack of energy, lack of execution, not being on the same page. Just internally as a player, when you hear your head coach talk about that, what does that mean? “Work harder. [It] means work harder, get with the guys more. [It] means you have to do more. If I am not on the same page with my receivers, then I have to do more to make sure that we are on the same page when we get out on the field. So, like I said before, that all starts with the quarterback, and that is who I was today. I have to be better for the team. I have to make sure I am ready so the team is ready.”

If you have faced this before — whether high school or college — where you have had those deficits, how did you learn from those mistakes? “Of course. Yes, I have been in this situation before, and the only thing you can do now — because you cannot go back and change it — is watch the film and then come in ready to attack, come in ready to learn, come in eager to learn, [and] come in with a mentality that I am not going to take anything personally. I am going to come in, and I am going to get coached hard, and I am going to love that coaching. And what they say to me, I am going to take in with full responsibility, and I am going to be honest with what happened. And then — yes, learning. That is all that matters right now is learning.”

S TYLER OWENS

Just in terms of the secondary overall, there's obviously room for growth every day, but how do you kind of feel about where you guys are at as a group after all this time? “I feel like we are coming along. [In] the first game of the season, [nobody] is [playing] perfect football, but the goal is to just keep building on what we are doing. So, we are not discouraged. But we have to keep working.”

As a guy who was a UDFA not long ago, knock on wood, hopefully you are good to go, and then you look for your third year. Does that — when you look back on it, I know you have a lot more to accomplish — do you look back on it like, 'Wow, that is kind of an impressive achievement,'? “In my head, I was not even supposed to be undrafted, but it is an accomplishment, but I don't even look at it like that.”

Just from a team standpoint — it is a preseason game obviously — but with the score of the game, how does that impact you? “It doesn’t really impact [anything]. [The] work doesn’t stop. We are just going to keep grinding. That’s it.”

Can you talk a little bit about just finishing the preseason and on towards the regular season. What did you see out there tonight? “I saw a whole bunch of guys competing, just trying to do their best, and you can’t be too mad at that.”

What is something that head coach Dan Quinn said to you guys, kind of after this game, that you are going to carry with you into this weekend and onward? “[Head coach Dan Quinn] just made sure we knew that's not our identity. We didn’t show who we are as a team, and we just have to come back [and] do it next week.”

Do you feel like this week has kind of snowballed on you guys between Detroit and this game? “It is just the way the game goes. Sometimes you can’t put your best foot forward. I don’t feel like it snowballed, because we are not going to let nothing [from the] past affect us like that.”