THE WASHINGTON COMMANDERS
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PERFORMANCE CENTER

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Head Coach Dan Quinn

Opening Statement:
“Hope everyone had a good Thanksgiving. We had a good Thursday practice and then the team got to spend a bunch of, learned a new word, Friendsgiving at one another's houses. So, it is a close group with these guys. So today was normal Friday for us, and then we'll head out to Arizona tonight. One player who won't be able to play is [CB] Amik [Robertson], and he's working his ass off to get back. He's just not there yet. And so still dealing with an ankle. So, all that said, glad to get rolling with you guys.”

On if there are long-term concerns about Robertson’s injury:
“We're not there yet. Just like a lot of ankle injuries, like he's working as hard as he can, just hasn't turned it yet. He's frustrated where we all are for him, but, man, is he competing to battle for it. But no, we've not had any long-term discussions.”

On how Aiyuk is looking after getting a full practice:
“So, for two days I thought he looks good. He's worked really hard. And he won't be activated for this game. But first impressions matter and to see him competing and going and he'll find the things he needs to work on and then what, if we're just on a trip early, then playbook and going through that again tomorrow and when we're doing our Saturday walkthroughs of getting reps and then we'll get rolling again. But it's off to a good first start. ”

On what he knows about Arizona Cardinals QB Josh Johnson’s game:
“Yeah, one, I definitely enjoyed coaching him. You feel Josh's football knowledge, his experience coming out, like his knowledge, run game, play action, to go with it. I imagine there's very few looks he has not seen or done in practice, but he's got like a real competitive spirit about him and just like the knowledge that the position's strong and we're certainly glad he was here. We'll be ready to go battle against him.”

On how he’s coaching the player’s to not react to the misdirection plays that Arizona likes to run:
“Yeah and [Arizona Cardinals Head Coach] Mike's [LaFleur] done a good job as a play caller and in their system it'll be, you'll also see like different personnel groupings of how do they use tight ends and where do they feature them. I think that's the sign of a good play caller of putting people in different locations. They've got a good run game and a good run action game that comes off of it, on the first, on the early downs. But that's a big piece of it when we're in zone to when we're in man and when you bump and when you can take them. And so, we've done a good job of working that this week a lot. But they're one of the teams that are higher in motions and shifts that we face.”

On challenges planning against Arizona Cardinals Defensive Coordinator Teryl Austin when there isn't much tape available:
"I don't think you wanna chase too much, but what we can say is what I told the team is TA's an excellent coach and like their scheme that he'll call within it, it would be different if any of us called a defense or an offense with the same system. But what I can say for him, man, like, this guy knows good football, what it looks like, how to do it. And so, not surprised him being the selection to do that. This is a very accomplished coach."

On the versatility of team's defense and planning to use that heading into the game against Arizona:
"Arizona has some versatile guys as well of how they use them. [Arizona Cardinals S] Budda [Baker] being one for sure. One opponent doesn't change too much compared to if you did it, 'From here on, we're not gonna do this or do that.' I do think versatility helps by package. Sometimes it might be how do you wanna utilize a defensive line or a linebacker group, five down, four down, versatility. And so that to me is in the front seven where a lot of the versatility comes in the back end, so much of it's disguise oriented. When I'm playing man, when I'm playing zone, who I'm gonna lean to, those are ones that it's kind of a balance between both of them."

On the importance of keeping the momentum as the division opens up:
"We have so many things we're trying to really dig in on to get better at. And I feel like our team is improving. And so that's where we wanna keep going on as hard as we can. There's certain focuses each week that we have but that's where it starts. How do we get better? How do we find the next spot? How do we go? I think when you're improving, we're not where we're going to be, but I like seeing measured progress to go. And so that's been the focus again, finding those things, digging in on those. And each opponent has some a little bit different, but in this instance all three phases have something. This something we're pushing hard."

On using three safeties in the nickel packages as opposed to playing three corners:
"I do like the three safeties. Two reasons. One, I like having one that you can have down in the run fits and the blitzing ability. So oftentimes an offense will use what's called an insert block, like into an A-gap or a B-gap or a C-gap. And so, the corners don't have the same experience as a nickel or a safety into those. And so, the run game on early downs feels more secure in that way. There's some times I would just use another linebacker and play base against that, but having a big nickel can do that if he can blitz. You do have to be able to cover. That's the advantage of having the third safety to do that. And then as third down, all things go. What's the down, what's the distance, how do you play? But that's one of the added benefits of it."

On having coached with Pittsburgh Steelers Head Coach Mike McCarthy and his thoughts on what's unfolding with him this past week:
"Yeah. I had an absolutely fantastic experience coaching with Mike. He was part of the reason I wanted to go there. And, over my three years with him, man, I learned a lot. So, I can't speak on anything from Pittsburgh, but what I can say is, I had an unbelievable coaching experience with him, like detailed, on it and got me better, challenged me in a lot of ways in how I'm thinking, what it could be. So yeah, I really enjoyed it."

On coming off of a big win Monday night and how he ensures focus continues into the next game:
"Yeah. I think you and I probably use the same term, turn the page. You know, what does that look

like and how does that go? Because then the preparation begins, the things you wanna emphasize begin. And it's good you enjoyed it, but now can you do it again? What's the next part of that to improve and go? Part of the reason I like going early on a trip like this is that let's close those airplane doors and go get rolling again and lock ourself in on what's ahead for this game. We're anticipating a hell of a dog fight and that's how you have to go about it. That's our league. If you look at yesterday, all these close games of football, I didn't see all of them, but I saw a lot of the endings and I know, like that's the battle."

On anything that's stood out to him about Aiyuk in his first couple days in Washington:
"Yeah, I think it's not surprising, but I think catch radius and how strong his hands were. I knew that but hadn't seen it for a couple years, I suppose. His aggressive nature to go get the ball and pluck it and being in that. He can get in and out of breaks very quickly. So those were two of the things that caught my eye yesterday and today. But it was a good first impression for sure. He's like everybody else, man, just kind of working hard and trying to learn it and new faces, new scheme, new people and I think he's off to a good start."

On successful tight end production this week and Arizona having a strong tight end group:
"Yeah. It's a lot. One, [McBride's] got an incredible amount of targets and catches, man, has he been productive? Different locations. Some tight ends can play just in line and good on play actions. Others can open up and play more in a traditional receiver. When you can do both, man, that's a real advantage because who do you put him? Where do you put him? He's close in the core in the run game. If somebody just split out all the side, it's okay, DBs play that. But when somebody's in line, out, moving around, that's what makes it a challenge. Like, you see him on the contested catches part of things, that's there for sure. So that's the main thing for me, different locations and where to go and how to play."

On what he wants to see from RB Jacory Croskey-Merritt in the remainder of the season after coming back from his groin injury:
"I think there's truth to that when you get to training camp, and this is like the third injury to have. And then to see him fully healthy, that was excellent. I saw how hard he worked in the time on IR to come back. So, one, I would say health, like over and over, that's big. And then from there, I've seen real improvement from him in the pass game, not just in blitz pickup, which is sometimes hard for running backs, but out of the backfield, making plays after he catches the ball. So, that was something that we went into the off season last year to say, 'Can that be something more that we're doing now we're changing styles of offense?' I've seen that. So, staying healthy and then the increased awareness in the passing, because the run game for him, I think is gonna take care of itself. He's aggressive, he's got lateral quickness, so I think those are the two things that make sure he can do that. All right, thanks, everybody. Safe travels. We'll see you there."