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FEATURE STORY:

## CHASE YOUNG THE BEST PLAYER YOU'VE EVER TRAINED

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# Discipline of players, coaches help Washington get through unprecedented season

*Washington only placed two players on the Reserve/COVID-19 list during the season, the second-lowest number in the NFL.*

By Zach Selby

**H**ead coach Ron Rivera sees head athletic trainer Ryan Vermillion as one of the best medical professionals in the league. He expressed that sentiment shortly after Vermillion was hired; in fact, he also said that he “couldn’t think of a better person” to lead the Washington Football Team’s training staff.

It is unlikely Vermillion or Rivera could have predicted the situation the NFL and the world was in during 2020. The novel coronavirus spread rapidly and forced the league to overhaul how the offseason and regular season would be carried out. The NFL believed that as long as players and staff members adhered to the protocols, it could have a full 16-game season and playoff slate.

Nearly every team had to put at least one player on the Reserve/COVID-19 list, but Washington only had to do so twice. It is a testament not only to the efforts made by Vermillion and other members of the staff throughout the year, but also to the devotion the players had to stay healthy in an unprecedented season.

“He’s done a heck of a job,” Rivera said of Vermillion, who was also Washington’s Infectious Control Officer. “He’s a stickler on it. It’s been amazing when something comes across, [the players will] call him immediately. They’ll call him at 2 o’clock, 3 o’clock, 4 o’clock in the morning. He has to deal with it, and he does. He does a great job with that.”

Washington experienced the same protocols as the rest of the NFL. Players had to take buses to and from a hotel during training camp, wear face masks whenever they were in the facility and wear contact tracers. But with the NFL not experiencing any schedule changes in response to a breakout until Week 4, Rivera admitted it could be easy for people to get lax.

Vermillion was part of helping Washington avoid that. He stayed on top of the rules, Rivera said, informing the team of any communication from the league, and helped enforce



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any changes made throughout the season.

“You get tested every day, everybody’s been negative so far which is awesome,” Rivera said Oct. 5,

“but you get lax so you have to have somebody that’s always kind of [helping] everybody and that’s what Ryan’s been doing for us, trying to keep us vigilant. That’s

important because you have to be vigilant. If you’re not, something crazy might happen.”

The players themselves were also very diligent, and it helped that staff members like senior director of player development Malcolm Blacken were consistently reminding them of the extra steps needed in order to stay healthy.

“I think that helps, I really do,” Rivera said, “When you have a guy who’s constantly: ‘Hey guys, don’t forget we have this. Hey guys, don’t

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# COVID

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forget we have that.' There's that constant reminder."

The NFL implemented other protocols besides wearing masks and contact tracers. Players were required to make specific appointments to work out and receive treatment so there were not too many people in the same room at one time. It was another hurdle the team had to overcome for game preparations, but Rivera's message to the players was simple: "Don't make a big deal out of it."

"If you make a big deal out of it and make it worrisome, then you're distracting yourself from the task, and that's getting ready to go play a football game," he said. "Focus on the football game. The situation and circumstances are what they are. Let's do with that, and let's go forward. It's no different than having to practice outside in the cold or in

the rain. There's nothing you can do about it. Just do it. Put your mind to it, set it and go."

That was a message Rivera preached for the rest of the season, especially as the number of positive tests began to rise around the league. One of the biggest tests came during Christmas weekend. Not only was the team dealing with

late into the season, everything has gone so well," Rivera said. "Let's continue to focus in on staying clear of everything and staying healthy. Hopefully, we can maintain that and continue."

Fortunately, every player went through the holidays COVID-free, and outside of two positive tests during the season from players

but the team still managed to make the best of the situation and work around the circumstances.

"Hats off to everybody that achieved it," Rivera said of finishing the season, "and hats off to our players for only having two guys having gone on COVID."

The NFL now enters its second offseason in a pandemic. Not much has been decided on how it will unfold, but a lot of it could be virtual once again. The positive is that Washington and the rest of the NFL have more experience operating in those conditions. And if last season gives any indication, Washington should be able to handle it just fine.

"We know how to handle Zoom now -- everybody has used it for an entire year -- so we'll know how to do things by Zoom," Rivera said. "We'll know how, when there's an opportunity to meet in person, to meet in person following the protocols. So, we're not going to be doing something we haven't had the opportunity to take advantage of."

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injuries to key players like Alex Smith, Terry McLaurin and Antonio Gibson, but it was also in the middle of a playoff push to win the NFC East. It could not afford to have a player test positive and miss a game. "Where we are right now this

who were on Injured Reserve and the practice squad, Washington made it through the entire season without the virus drastically affecting the roster. It was limiting, Rivera said, having to deal with virtual meetings and other protocols,



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# 'The best player you've ever trained'

*Chase Young has been trying to validate that claim to his personal trainer, Martin Gibson, since high school. It's brought him to the doorstep of the NFL as one of the best defensive prospects in recent memory.*

By Kyle Stackpole

It was November of 2016 when Chase Young, who had just finished his senior season at DeMatha Catholic in Maryland, walked through the doors of Gibson Performance Training.

Young was there to see Martin Gibson, a personal trainer who at the time doubled as the Stags' running backs coach. Young told Gibson the year before that he would come work out with him, but that never happened, leaving Gibson cautiously optimistic when Young made the same claim that offseason.

This time, though, Young followed through with his declaration. And his expectations were high.

"I want to be the best player you've ever trained," Gibson remembers Young saying.

Gibson has been Young's personal trainer ever since. He turned Young into a college-ready prospect, worked with him whenever possible during his illustrious career at Ohio State and prepared him for the 2020 NFL Draft, when Washington selected him with the No. 2 overall pick.

Gibson's focus then shifted towards pushing Young to be the best possible professional entering his rookie campaign in the nation's capital. Young's goals are high, but having worked with Young for the past three-and-a-half years, Gibson believes he can achieve them.

"I think Chase can be one of the best guys to ever play the game at that position," Gibson said of the 2020 Associated Press Defensive Rookie of the Year. "I think he can be one of the best ones to ever play the game."

Young was already one of the country's top recruits before he began working with Gibson. The dynamic edge rusher racked up 19 sacks, 118 tackles, five forced fumbles and two defensive touchdowns that fall, leading the undefeated Stags to the Washington Catholic Athletic Conference (WCAC) championship and making USA Today's All-USA team. He was the No. 1 recruit in the state of



**Arguably the most talented guy to go to the NFL in quite a while," former Buckeyes head coach Urban Meyer said of Young. "I'm not saying he's the best player yet, because he has to earn that...but just as far as God-given height, size, strength, speed...you got it all."**

Maryland, according to 247Sports, and eventually committed to Ohio State over other powerhouses such as Alabama, Clemson and LSU the summer before his senior year.

Still, Young needed to bulk up if he hoped to immediately contribute for the Buckeyes. He was 6-foot-5 yet weighed 223 pounds -- too skinny for a major conference defensive end.

Gibson was there to help.

"I said, 'Hey, by the time you

leave, I'm going to get you to 255 [pounds]," Gibson recalled telling Young. "He kind of just tapped me on the back, nodded his head and was like, 'All right, Coach Mo.' But it was kind of like an, 'OK, I get what you're saying, but it's not going to happen.'"

Young gained nearly 35 pounds over the next three months while enhancing his speed and maintaining his flexibility. He was also stronger and more explosive thanks

to slowly working towards the desired weight.

Sometimes, though, Young would get carried away. Martin always had Young prepare two peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and once he got out of school, he would eat those sandwiches on the way to the gym. That way, Martin knew Young had enough energy to finish the workout.

One day, as Young continued to fill out, he arrived at the training facility with four sandwiches. When Martin questioned him, Young said he was excited about gaining weight and wanted to keep going.

"And I was like, 'Nahh, see that's what I'm saying. I don't want to rush. Don't rush it. Let's just stay the course, stay the way we've been doing it and things like that,' which we did."

By the time he enrolled at Ohio State in June of 2017, the faster, sturdier and nimbler Young weighed about 260 pounds. He was no longer going to redshirt as the Buckeyes initially planned. He was ready to make an impact right away.

Gibson has worked out with a host of athletes since becoming a personal trainer, so becoming the best is a tall task for anyone. Gibson has trained multiple professional boxers, including former world champion Jarrett Hurd, as well as several NFL players. He also trained New York Giants running back Saquon Barkley, the No. 2 overall pick in 2018 and subsequent NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year.

Young put himself in the conversation with what he accomplished at Ohio State. After showing flashes of excellence as a freshman, Young thrived in his first season as a full-time starter and then reached unprecedented heights in 2019.

Despite missing two games, he set a school record with 16.5 sacks and led the nation with six forced fumbles. His efforts earned him nearly every individual defensive award and a trip to New York for the Heisman Trophy Ceremony. He was just the ninth defensive player to be named a finalist since 1982.

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# YOUNG

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“Arguably the most talented guy to go to the NFL in quite a while,” former Buckeyes head coach Urban Meyer said of Young. “I’m not saying he’s the best player yet, because he has to earn that...but just as far as God-given height, size, strength, speed...you got it all.”

By the time Young declared for the 2020 NFL Draft, he was widely regarded as one of the top prospects in the class. Gibson knew then that Young was going to be one of the first picks, so his objective was to mentally and physically prepare his client to succeed against professional competition. To do so, Gibson largely stuck to the routine that had gotten Young to that point.

“I’m a believer in the saying that if it’s not broke, don’t fix it,” Gibson said. “To me, I think we’ve done pretty well in the years that we stayed with our process. We did some of the same things that we’ve been doing; we’ve just added things, like it might have been more weight at this point, more reps. I have a lot more time to prepare him now than I’ve had in the past except for that first year getting ready for [Ohio State]. We’ve pretty much done some of the same things.”

Young’s regimen consisted of fast-paced circuit training and dynamic workouts aimed to condition him to play against up-tempo offenses. As an edge-rusher, he cannot afford to get tired. Fatigue could mean the difference between a takedown and a touchdown.

His offseason program began at the Los Angeles Lakers’ training center, where he worked with Gibson three times per day during the last two weeks of January. With Young having just completed the football season, Gibson wanted to make sure Young was doing everything he could to get back into top shape. Young lifted early in the mornings, ran on the track in the afternoons and then did either field work or physical therapy after that.

Young then completed two workouts per day -- lifting in the morning and either field work or running in the afternoon -- for the following three weeks leading up to the NFL Scouting Combine in late February. Young also boxed twice a week during that span in order to “shock the body” with unfamiliar workouts.

“I train boxers as well, so you’re talking about guys just trying to keep that same energy for 12 rounds for three minutes, that can be pretty

tough,” Gibson said. “So for me, if I can prepare your body, prepare your mind to deal with that, day in and day out, by the time you touch that field, I just field like you’ll be on a different level.”

Following the combine, Young’s plan was to return to Los Angeles to continue training, show off during Ohio State’s Pro Day in mid-March and finally fly to Las Vegas to hear his name called at the beginning of the NFL Draft.

However, the coronavirus obliterated those plans; all of the sudden, Young went from working out at a state-of-the-art facility to training in the basement of Gibson’s cousin’s house in Clinton, Maryland. And with all NFL offseason programs being fully virtual, Young had to prepare for training camp on his own.

Young’s post-combine routine mostly stayed the same. Some days, he only did upper-body workouts.

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## YOUNG

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Other days, he did lower-body workouts and some kind of cardio, such as running or football-specific drills. Young also traveled to Ohio on multiple occasions to work with Buckeyes defensive line coach Larry Johnson for two weeks apiece.

“He was always willing to work; that’s what I admire about Chase,” Johnson told the Washington team site in May. “You got to have that mindset as an elite athlete. He had a great work ethic.”

Like many NFL players, Young documented this unprecedented offseason on social media, which resulted in a series of viral posts. In one, he demonstrated his strength by benching an undetermined amount of weight. In others, he displayed his quickness and agility during on-field workouts and showcased his explosiveness by clearing several hurdles with ease.

Gibson saw that athletic ability and ambition on an everyday basis, so he had to get creative to push Young even harder.

There were times when Gibson

designed a workout he did not expect Young to finish. That way, when Young failed, Gibson could respond with phrases such as, “Oh, you’re not as great as you thought you were,” or, “You’re not as good as everyone is saying you are.”

Gibson also used Young’s lofty goals against him. If he did not think Young was giving maximum effort, he would remind Young of what he expects for himself.

“I know if you’re not doing what you’re supposed to do, that’s something I can always hold you accountable for,” Gibson said. “I can always remind you, ‘Hey, this is what you want. This wasn’t my dream, and this didn’t come out of my mouth. But this is what you want. And if this is what you want, then you need to do those things to make it happen.’”

With training camp having kicked off July 28 and a full season coming after that, most NFL personnel used the first few weeks in July to relax. Young was not one of those people.

“Yeah, probably just sticking at home with the workouts,” Gibson said in June. “Chase is a dude that is self-motivated. He’s no fool. He knows the expectations, he knows they’re high, he knows he has this target on his back, people want to see him fail -- he knows that. He knows people question whether he’s as good as people make him out to be. That’s all you need.”

Instead, Young trained with Gibson to maintain what he built during the offseason, then embarked on one of the best rookie campaigns in franchise history. His Pro Bowl campaign included 7.5 sacks and four forced fumbles -- both of which led all rookies -- to go along with 44 total tackles (32 solo), 12 quarterback hits, 10 tackles for loss, four passes defended, three fumble recoveries and a touchdown. He was a menace to opposing offenses, a captain to his teammates and one of the faces of a franchise coming off its first division title since 2015.

Young has dreamed of playing in the NFL since he was about 6 years old, and that aspiration has driven him to become one of the best young players in the league -- all while still trying to validate his claim that he’s the best Gibson has ever trained.

“Chase is definitely making a case for himself,” Gibson said. “He’s making a case for him, but we still got years ahead, and there are still some things he needs to do at the NFL level.”





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# Sports Medicine physicians: Treating sports injuries as a team

By Peter MacArthur, MD

## Inova Sports Medicine

Inova Sports Medicine is the Official Sports Medicine Partner of the Washington Football Team.

Peter MacArthur, MD is a primary care physician at Inova Sports Medicine board certified in family and sports medicine. Serving as a team physician for the Washington Football Team, he has a special interest in the prevention and management of sports injuries and regenerative medicine.

You've suffered a sports injury, and you need to see a doctor. Should you see an orthopedic surgeon? Or would a primary care sports medicine specialist be a better bet?

Sports injuries come in all shapes and sizes, and treatments vary, too. Here's a look at how these different types of physicians work together to deliver the very best care.

## Orthopedic Surgeons

Orthopedic surgeons can diagnose and treat all musculoskeletal injuries — even those that don't require surgery. However, these specialists also have expertise in surgical treatments such as replacing damaged joints or repairing torn ligaments and tendons.

## Primary Care Sports Medicine Doctors

Primary care sports medicine physicians typically have a background in a primary care field such as family medicine, internal medicine or pediatrics. They have additional training in sports medicine and can also diagnose and treat all musculoskeletal injuries. However, they focus on the non-surgical treatment of these injuries, often employing the use of ultrasound and other non-surgical modalities in their evaluation and treatment plan. When patients do require surgery, they work closely with



orthopedic surgeons to ensure appropriate care is obtained.

## Sports Medicine Doctors: Who Should You See?

Orthopedic surgeons and primary care sports medicine doctors can diagnose and treat any type of sports injury. So where do you start?

Orthopedic surgeons are often a good choice when you've had a traumatic injury, such as a ruptured ligament in the knee, as they're able to perform a surgical fix when needed.

Primary care sports medicine specialists can also diagnose and treat traumatic injuries and will refer you to a surgeon when this is indicated. They are also a good

first stop for recurring injuries or any overuse injuries that may develop over time. Many of these physicians also have expertise in concussion management and ultrasound-guided procedures.

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Injured? Inova Sports Medicine's team of experts will develop your personalized plan to get you back in the game. Request an appointment today at [inova.org/sports](https://www.inova.org/sports) or call 703-970-6464.





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# Kelvin Harmon aims to return from first major injury better than before

*Harmon had never missed a practice before suffering a major knee injury last offseason, but he has not let that setback shape his future outlook.*



By Kyle Stackpole

**K**elvin Harmon had never missed a practice. Not growing up, not in college, not ever. So when his second NFL season was lost before it started -- he suffered a major knee injury while training in mid-June -- he was admittedly shocked. That disappointment quickly turned into motivation, though.

"The way I was brought up and my religion, I believe everything happens for a reason, and this was a time for me to look back and reflect and just come back stronger, so I took it as a positive," Harmon said earlier this week. "I tried to make it into a positive because obviously there was nothing I could do. Complaining isn't going to do anything,

it's not going to bring my knee back, but putting in that work is going to do that."

Harmon, who underwent surgery to repair a torn ACL and LCL in his right knee in early July, ran his first route a few weeks ago and has since been regularly posting workout videos on social media.

It's been a long road, but Harmon's first major recovery is on the right track.

"For me personally, I just had to figure out what I needed to do as far as getting myself together physically and mentally for rehab," Harmon said. "And then from there, just come in and execute and dominate each and every day so I could get myself back on the field better than I was before."

The 6-foot-2, 215-pound sixth-round draft pick emerged as one of Washington's top receiving options

as a rookie in 2019, averaging five targets and nearly 41.4 yards per game from Week 11 on. Combined with his physicality, curiosity and immediate success as a blocker, Harmon had "all the traits" of a promising young wide receiver.

But just as Harmon was gearing up for his second training camp, the knee injury thrust him into uncharted territory. Everything he worked for was put on hold, replaced by an extensive recovery he had never experienced.

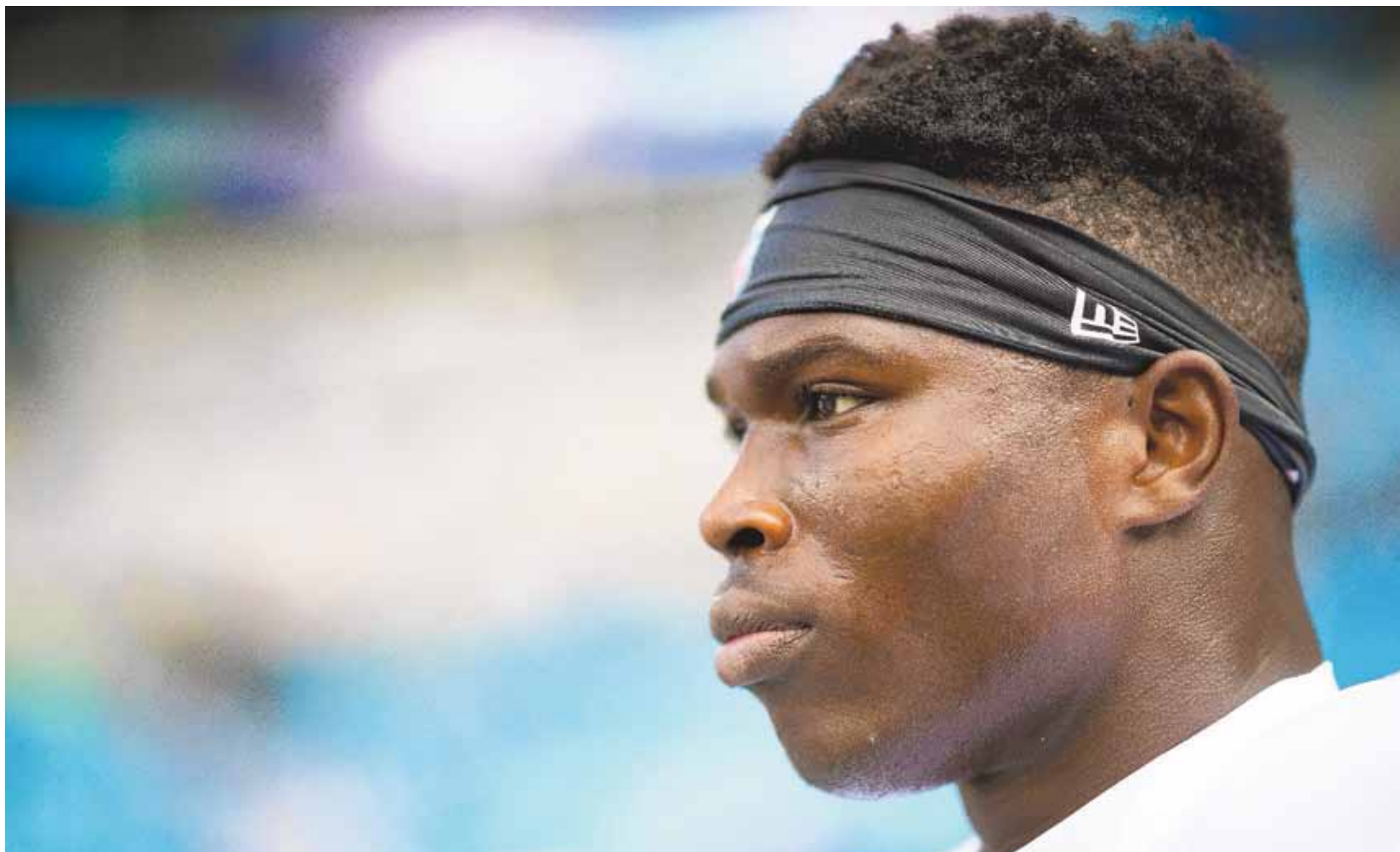
One of the first steps in that process was working out on the exercise bike, which he accomplished about two weeks after surgery. About a week later, the team congregated at the Inova Sports and Performance Center to begin preparing for the 2020 campaign. Harmon was there, too -- gearing up for 2021.

For support, Harmon has leaned on his mother, father, brothers and close family friends. His improved relationship with God through bible study has also helped. "Obviously had some down days and things like that, but I don't think I let [the injury] shape me at all."

In fact, the biggest thing Harmon learned about himself was that he was "definitely up for the challenge" of turning this setback into a breakthrough. And as time passed, he began to see results. At 12 weeks, he lightly jogged in a pool; at 14, he ran on the treadmill. After four months of recovery, he tested his agility on the speed ladder.

All the while, Harmon went through the same COVID-19 protocols as his peers, such as daily testing and contact tracing.

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## HARMON

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He attended meetings when they did not coincide with rehab and continued to interact with his teammates, especially fellow second-year wide receivers Terry McLaurin and Steven Sims Jr.

"My main focus for the most part

was my rehab," he said. "but also staying in the mix, too, so I could still be familiar with the team and still be involved with that chemistry and that camaraderie."

And if he ever needed inspiration? Head coach Ron Rivera's cancer battle certainly sufficed.

"I was able to talk to him a lot when I saw him throughout the building," Harmon said. "[We]

always spoke to each other and always encouraged one another because he was going through his time, too. I think it was very motivating in a sense knowing what he went through, and he motivated the whole team, so we could definitely relate to each other in that sense. Obviously, his was by far way worse than mine, but just as far as overcoming that adversity throughout

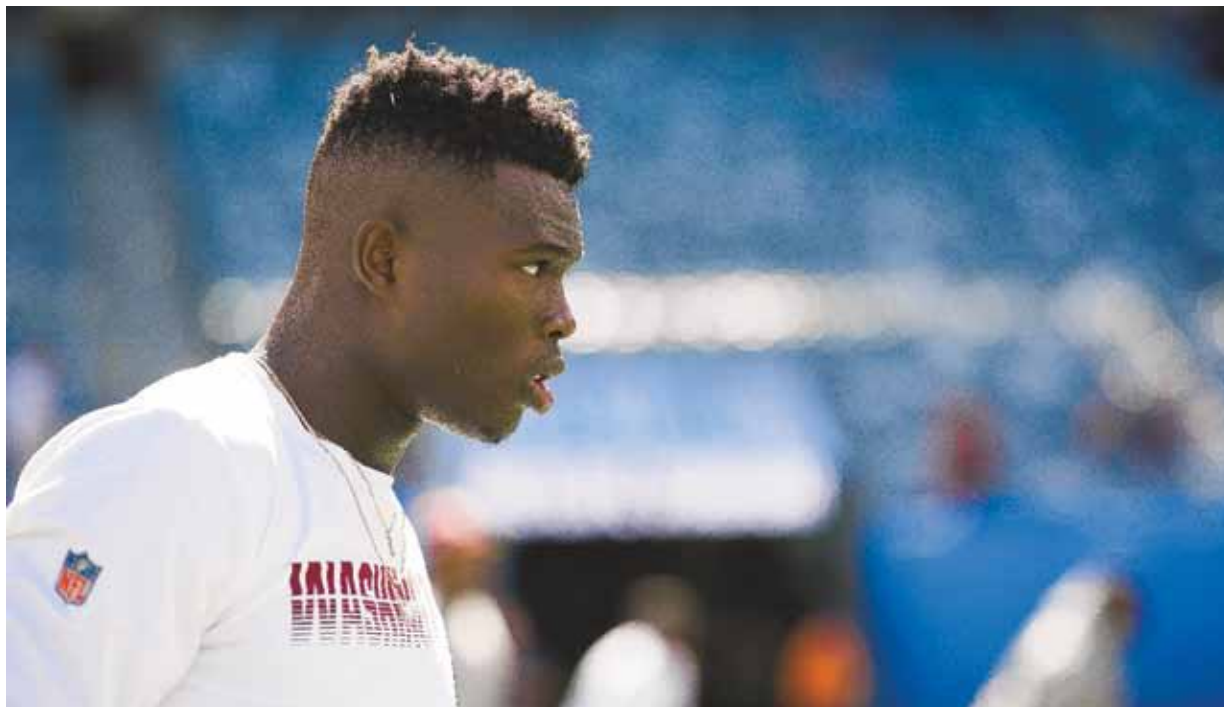
the season, I think that's something that we could kind of relate to."

With Rivera leading the charge, Washington overcame a 1-5 start to win five of its final seven games and secure its first NFC East title since 2015. Harmon viewed the season as a "great building block" for the future and proof this franchise could be a contender in this league.

But before Harmon can directly contribute to the team's turnaround, he's fully dedicated to returning to full strength. He'll spend his days at the team facility strengthening his knee, improving his mobility and regaining his explosiveness -- all of which will contribute to him trusting his right leg more.

And once he has completed his comeback, he'll rejoin a young and diverse wide receiver group battling to elevate the offense to new heights.

"I think the sky's the limit for us. We've got a lot of young guys competing. We've got guys like Terry, Cam [Sims], Steve -- we're all different types of receivers. ...Steel sharpens steel, and that's what you'll see throughout training camp and OTAs, and the best man is going to be out there. It's a very competitive room."





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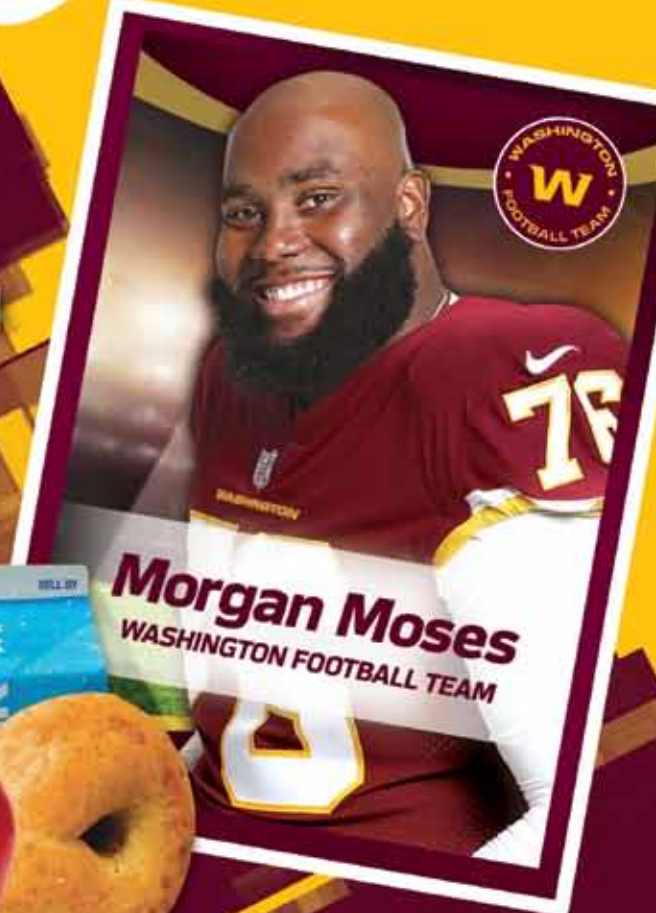


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# Washington Salute and Women of Washington partner with Blue Star families and SweatNGlow to host virtual CHAIRity yoga event for military families

By Alec LaCorazza

**O**n Tuesday, Nov. 17, the Washington Football Team's military appreciation club and female empowerment platform continued the month-long celebration of Salute to Service Month hosting CHAIRity Yoga with Blue Star Families and SweatNGlow. The hour-long virtual connection event was a part of the team's effort to honor the empowerment pillar in the NFL's Salute to Service mission – empowering and leveraging organizations committed to serving those that serve. Blue Star Families, founded in 2009, is committed to strengthening military

families by connecting them with their neighbors – individuals and organizations – to create vibrant communities of mutual support.

CHAIRity Yoga was in-part with Blue Star Families long-time partnership with SweatNGlow, the world's largest hot yoga network. Petra Smeltzer, Founder & CEO of SweatNGlow, hosted a 30-minute yoga session live from FedExField describing techniques to keep military families (and more specifically children) focused, engaged, and healthy. While families continue working and learning from home during the national pandemic, there is more pressure on families to be situated at home.

Following Petra's yoga session,

CNN personality and expert on nutrition and wellness Mark MacDonald was introduced to discuss best practices in meal preparation – and a well-balanced diet of proteins, carbs, and fats. Featuring a brand he trusts and advocates for, Mark discussed the benefits of ZEN and the ZEN Project 8 have had on military families he's worked with – detailing the benefits of eating healthy and living a healthier lifestyle and its correlation to mental wellness and strong communication among families. MacDonald concluded the event telling all participating military families they'd be sent products to help them get through the holiday season fast approaching!

Included In both 30-minute sessions, Washington Football Team personality GeNienne Samuels introduced special guests such as two-time Super Bowl champion Mike Nelms and an Air Force family. They all participated in the yoga session and discussed the benefits of yoga, especially around the holiday season! Military families across the National Capitol region participated in the event, posting questions and comments to all panelists throughout the event!

Washington Salute and Women of Washington would like to thank all organizations that participated and military families that tuned in live!



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