

Commanders' Players Are Complaining to HC Ron Rivera About Their New OC Eric Bieniemy








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 Ron Rivera is the very definition of "Old School," he played for the "85 Bears" under the hard-nosed coaching style of the great Mike Ditka, alongside Chicago legends like Walter Payton, Ricard Dent, and Mike Singletary. The man known throughout the league as "Riverboat Ron" rose through the coaching ranks for nearly two decades before finally landing his first head coaching gig with the Carolina Panthers in 2011, where he led the franchise to a Super Bowl appearance five years later. Needless to say, Coach Rivera understands the importance of attention to detail and the method behind a grueling training camp when it comes to redefining the identity of a football team for the better.

    The 2023 NFL season will mark Coach Rivera's third year at the helm of the Washington Commanders, who were just purchased by an ownership group led by Josh Harris and [Earvin "Magic" Johnson](#) for \$6.05 billion. He is leading a team that has only made the playoffs five times in the last twenty years. In an era where offensive-minded head coaches like Sean Payton, Sean McVay, Kyle Shannahan, Mike McDaniels, Zac Taylor, and Matt LaFleur are in high demand, the Commanders recently hired [Eric Bieniemy](#) away from the Kansas City Chiefs as their new offensive coordinator.

Although Eric Bieniemy was groomed by Andy Reid, a man who some sports analysts consider to be the second greatest offensive-minded coach in NFL history behind Bill Walsh, several teams opted not to offer him a head coaching position after completing the interviewing process. Thus, making his most recent jump to the Washington Commanders his best opportunity to display his play-calling abilities on a team not overshadowed by future Hall of Famers like Andy Reid, Patrick Mahomes, and Travis Kelce. In Washington, Bieniemy has a clean slate and complete autonomy over the offense that needs him. Still, according to reports, his "Old School" approach in communicating his message to his players has already ruffled some feathers. After an exhausting practice, several Washington Commanders' players (including veterans) went behind Eric Bieniemy's back to Coach Rivera to air out their grievances about how demanding their new OC was being.

"I had a number of guys come to me and I said, 'Hey, just go talk to him.' I said, 'Understand what he's trying to get across to you.' I think as they go and they talk and they listen to him, it's been enlightening for a lot of these guys," Coach Rivera said. "I mean, it's a whole different approach. Again, you're getting a different kind of player from the players back in the past, especially in light of how things are coming out of college football. So a lot of these young guys, they do struggle with certain things."

The news story caused a handful of Bieniemy's former players with the Kansas City Chiefs, such as Tyreek Hill and Mecole Hardman, to come to his defense.

"Man there is no other coach that has your back like [Eric Bieniemy] !!" Tyreek Hill tweeted. "Take that coaching and get better we all been through...it's tough but I promise you it will make you better."

Meanwhile, others who have played for Eric Bieniemy, such as the Philadelphia Eagles' all-time leading rusher LeSean McCoy lean more towards the criticism. [On Wednesday's episode of The Herd with Colin Cowherd, McCoy called Bieniemy's coaching style "out of touch."](#)

Ron Rivera and Eric Bieniemy are uniquely positioned as HC and OC in a league where opportunities such as these aren't often afforded to Latino and Black coaches. Rivera is the second oldest coach in the NFC (behind Pete Carroll), and Bieniemy is one of the oldest offensive coordinators in a league trending toward youthful offensive-minded coaches who can develop creative schemes for young quarterbacks. So, if Washington's head coach and OC cannot change the fortunes of the Commanders soon, they may find themselves on the outskirts, where it would be even more challenging for Bieniemy to land the head coaching job he has sought for years. Last year, Coach Rivera led the Commanders to an 8-8-1 record, which was an improvement from their previous record in the 2021 season, but the team still finished last in the NFC East, behind three playoff teams (Philadelphia Eagles, Dallas Cowboys, and New York Giants). Only time will tell if the addition of Eric Bieniemy can provide their offense with new schemes better suited for their starting quarterback Sam Howell and some much-needed firepower.