

Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

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Dan Quinn

Weekday Press Conference



DAN QUINN: How is it going, everybody? We can get started here this afternoon.

Spoke to you a little bit last night. I think after going through it, after no pre-season, there were certainly some questions that still had to be answered. I thought we improved certainly on the line of scrimmage on both sides. It felt that way in the game. Our run game, the play pass that comes off, some of the explosive plays, pass protection.

Thought same thing on the defensive side in the run game and finding ways to affect the quarterback more than we had in the past. I thought those two things were things that I liked.

Heading into the game, we worked hard on tackling during training camp. We ended the game with five missed tackles. Those were some things, without pre-season, that were on my mind heading into the opener.

There are some things that I know we still certainly need to work on to end up in the negative in the turnover margin. Certainly not where we want to be. I thought the game really came down to the fourth down opportunities. We actually were involved in really five of them that I thought had a real impact on the game, not just on scoring but field position as well. That was three of them on offense, two fourth and twos, a fourth and three.

The fake punt we ended up turning the ball over on, as well as giving up a fourth down, not only a first down but a touchdown. I thought those were the turning points in the game. We still need work in those areas, taking the ball away, and certainly those fourth down moments.

We wanted to have the boldness when the opportunities came to go after it. When we didn't nail those, we certainly missed on some opportunities and made it hard on ourselves.

Those are a few of the things I wanted to see where we

needed help on, where I thought we improved, some areas where we still got work to do.

That's where we're at today. Went through the truth of it all with the team, getting ready to turn the page to Dallas.

Glad to open it up to you guys with questions.

Q. How do you get the coverage tighter? How do you get the coverage tighter is the question?

DAN QUINN: Yeah, that's a fair question.

I would say what we know heading in that, I think we made it too easy in terms of disguise. That would be really more along the lines I would think of, of having multiple looks in coverage for a quarterback who is as accurate as Russ is.

I'd say that's for sure one that we'd like to have over and do different. More not just tighter but more adjustments, more variations, I would say.

Q. How did the safeties grade out?

DAN QUINN: I thought from the tackling standpoint, that's where I thought we had one miss. And Kazeem in the middle of the field I thought played with good energy and hard. Overall I think in the secondary, there would be some plays they'd like to have over and certainly we would want to do differently.

Q. A.J. Terrell, how you evaluate him? Early in the game on the sack, he had great coverage, but later in the game he got beat on the slant. Talk about his overall performance as a rookie.

DAN QUINN: I would say, number one, I just expected him to play tough and aggressive, and he certainly did. Yeah, at the end in the four minute the double move got him on the slant where he was wanting to go defend him. They got him over the top.

First-year players, there's some that you don't like it to happen. But you know that's part of it, of their training, their development. I thought for his first time out, he challenged at the line of scrimmage, tackled well, played with the physicality he has in training camp.

Q. As you move forward, looking at your defensive back situation, where does Kendall Sheffield stand? We saw him on the sideline with a boot. Does he have to have a surgery? How much did you maybe miss him yesterday?

DAN QUINN: Well, we definitely missed him, there's no question about that. The speed, the ability to match it up, that's why Sheff has unique things.

As far as his availability, it's kind of on a week-by-week of where we're at, seeing how he's doing. I don't have any updates for you today regarding him from the game. We'll see what it looks like for him this week. But we don't anticipate it being a long-term issue. We'll keep you updated as soon as we know more as well.

Yeah, we certainly missed him yesterday.

Q. We were talking to Foye earlier today. He made the comment that something that the defense he felt like needed to pick up on to clean up was pre-snap communication, making sure they were in the right spots, right assignments. What did you see that needed to be improved in that space?

DAN QUINN: I would say for us, part of playing good defense is the communication. It's player to player, on the field. But having the disguises also help. Certainly when you're playing a quarterback such as Russell, who has good man and zone indicators, if it's one or the other, this is where I'm going to go. Having the communication to know when to show the look, when not to, that's an important thing.

Give them credit. Certainly for Seattle, a team that really had come in with a heavy emphasis on the run, for them to throw the ball as effectively as they did, that was a real factor in this game for sure.

Q. Looking ahead to Dallas, are there some things you kind of take away from that standpoint of seeing Seattle looking similar to Dallas in terms of the run heavy, having a mobile quarterback?

DAN QUINN: They certainly are. They've got a fantastic receiving corps. Terrific runningback, and quarterback who is mobile, accurate on the run. Each game is different, the matchups are different. But some of the things that can carry over are the lessons that you learn from one week into another one. As we're moving forward, I think that's one of those lessons to make sure that we don't miss.

Q. You mentioned early the line of scrimmage on both sides. Talk about what the film showed of the

offensive line. You were complimentary after the game about their play even when it became easier for Seattle to go after the quarterback.

DAN QUINN: Yeah, I think heading in we knew having more balance in the run game was going to be a big piece of this. So in the first half I think maybe we were at 14 or 15 carries, somewhere in that space, to show we had more balance. I think that's an effective part of what we're doing.

By and large I thought that group had put a lot of work in. We still mixed in a little bit of two guys at the left guard spot, sure you saw that, with Carp and Matt. We'll continue that into where it solidifies one way or other.

Q. The commitment to the run, you've talked a couple times about wanting to be bold and aggressive. How do you weigh that when you're making these strategic decisions when some of these bold decisions could endanger your ability to continue to commit to the run?

DAN QUINN: I think really in those moments, I'll kind of take you through a little bit of the thinking. If you're working from backwards, the fourth down towards the end of the game when you're down two scores, field goals aren't going to help you in those spaces so you're going to keep on going for it.

In the beginning when we're outside of field goal range, do you punt and try to pin them down or continue going. I think some of it has to do with the offense you're playing against, too, to make sure you're going to stay aggressive, continue on with some possessions.

At the end of it, if you have three of them, you'd certainly like to be two-out-of-three on fourth down. They weren't fourth and sixes, they were manageable in our eyes.

As far as on the special teams side, we let up a touchdown, had a three-and-out. The look was there for us to go. When we didn't execute it based on the turnover, that was some consequences that gave them great field position.

But there's definitely risk involved. Having an aggressive mindset doesn't mean doing it just for the hell of it. If the look's there, you want to go for it, you take your shots. I think that's what we did.

That's not going to change in terms of our aggressiveness, but I'm certainly not pleased with the result at the end of the day.

Q. Two series in the game. After the Seahawks took a



14-3 lead, you cut it to 14-9. The next offensive series you ran the ball one time. Do you think after cutting it to a one-score game, is that a series where you'd like to reassert that identity of running the ball a little bit more?

DAN QUINN: Was that series a two minute at the half or prior?

Q. I believe it was prior.

DAN QUINN: Yeah.

Q. Draw for 10 yards, then a few play-action passes.

DAN QUINN: We'll have to go back and double-check. I think that might have been a two minute at the end of the half. When they were on offense, we used some timeouts to try to create that moment to go. I'll have to go back and double-check that.

Yeah, in a normal scenario, we would not like to have that kind of ratio for sure. If it was a two minute one where it was one timeout, maybe 75 or 80 seconds to try and move 50 to 60 yards, that would be different. If it was the one you're describing, yeah, that's not the type of balance we're after.

Q. After Seattle gets three straight penalties, they're second and 29, you end up forcing that fourth down but give up enough yardage for them to make a 42-yard field goal. Are you looking at adjusting the way you play that defense to not allow such big gains on second and third down?

DAN QUINN: That's absolutely true. Not all third downs are created equal. We had one on offense, we were third and 16, but gained 10 to give a chance at a long field goal. It was a 49 yarder. The same thing happened on their end of it.

Whenever you're defending on defense, there's two lines. There's one, where can this player go from a field goal standpoint, and where is the third down marker. More often than not, you'd use that distance as the one to say, This is the line that they have to stop at.

There could be other game scenarios, up by a few scores, where you're not down and aggressive. By and large, those are good guidelines to go off of.

Q. Yesterday on the snap count report, Kazeem had 62, Keanu 59, Ricardo 25. Is that how you envision that rotation going with Ricardo getting roughly 40% of the snaps?

DAN QUINN: No, I think it's on a game-by-game basis. They used probably more two tight end sets compared to three wide receivers. Depending on the game and the situation, how people want to utilize the personnel, I think that will factor in before you'll see Keke and Ricardo, theirs going up and down. Kazeem to a certain extent. Probably Keke and Ricardo.

There will be other games as we're getting further along, we've worked Keanu into a dime linebacker spot as well. Let's see how they're progressing certainly coming off the injury with Keke, as well.

Q. With Foye getting the extended look, obviously now that he's playing that role, how do you think he came out after he watched the film?

DAN QUINN: Well, one of the things that you can always count on from Foye is super reliable. He's in the right spot making the right decisions. We're still looking for him to see if he has the moments to create the big plays for the takeaways. That's something that we'll always hit with him.

Yesterday, as far as tackling and playing in the box, at the line of scrimmage, we're certainly pleased. There's nobody has a better feel for an on-side kick than him. Somehow that's a part of his game over the last couple of years that has come to life. We gave him a little talk to on the sideline prior to the on-side kick. Damn sure he came up with another one.

Q. You mentioned A.J. earlier. Your thoughts on the other rookies making their debut yesterday?

DAN QUINN: We hit A.J. up. Matt Hennessy, having the ability to work in at guard, playing inside, next to Jake and Alex, it's kind of the ideal setting for a player to come in. Two veterans who really have their game in order. Rely on them, communicate with them. Good to see him get some snaps. Hopefully those were increase as we go.

Jaylinn and Mykal played a good bit of their snaps on special teams. Mykal started on all four, Jaylinn was on three of the four. We were pleased with that.

Didn't get a chance to see Marlin's debut this past week. Hopefully that will be this week coming up as long as there's a good, solid week of practice.

Hofrichter, we knew that he had a strong leg. I think you saw that yesterday. Good hang time, good get-off time. Having him being a part of special teams, I thought it was a good outing on his first game punt.

Q. When your decision is to go for it on fourth, how much of that is gut, how much is that analytics, or maybe a combination?

DAN QUINN: I think it's both. I would say part of analytics is you get the information, then you do trust your gut to say that this is a moment to use all of it or one to not. You can't be in the game, because the analytics are before the game. You have to be in the game to go.

If there's a chance to be aggressive, I certainly want to do that. I look at all the numbers as it goes through for each series. When the moments are there, you want to go take them.

In-game feel, your gut has a good feel for it as well. Somebody told me analytics, a good line if I remember correctly, it's on tap but not on top. It's part of the decision but not at the top of it.

Q. Last year the season sort of jumped the rails early. You made some adjustments halfway through. Only one game in, will you move quickly if you think things are going sideways? What is your level of concern right now after one game?

DAN QUINN: Well, I would say, yeah, I'm really focused on the 2020. I haven't looked back a lot. I was extremely pissed after game one last year. I guess as the head coach I have the right to go back.

I think there's probably a difference between, like, discouragement and disappointment. When you're discouraged there's some things, this has to change, this has to change. There's things in this game you would like to have over, the fourth downs, turnover margin.

There were also things I wanted to see improve on this team. Although we didn't get the win, that part of the game showed improvement. I expect us to make improvements as we're going and keep continuing to do that.

The first part of your question, if there was anything regarding changes. No, I would never have a hesitation in that space. It's always all about the performance. I do sense this group is going to get better and better as we're going.

Q. The offensive line. You said you want to continue to see the competition between James and Matt. Is that the kind of thing you need live game action to evaluate? What is your plan on when you want to make a call on that?

DAN QUINN: I thought Carp played well. It was probably

one of his better games he's played as a Falcon. Having both of them in there, it's good to get the looks against new guys in different spaces. I thought Carp came out of the game with a strong performance on his side of things.

Yeah, live work as we're going through it. Sometimes it's not quite set. You need a few weeks to get into that space, roles to determine and go. You don't want to it at a lot of positions, but you can manage it if it's at one.

Thank you, guys. We'll talk again Wednesday.

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