

Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

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Arthur Smith

Postgame Press Conference



Q. What were you hoping to see from the quarterbacks tonight?

ARTHUR SMITH: We did a very poor job of executing. We had way too many penalties, put us in a lot of get-back-on-track situations. Clearly never got in a rhythm after that.

I don't want to overreact. Go back and see the tape. I thought the first ball coming out of AJ's hand, ripped it to Tajae on one of those early third downs, we got a penalty for being in illegal formation, tackle being too far in the backfield.

Those are self-inflicted wounds. I got to do a better job of coaching us. That's stuff that's going to get you beat. Clearly tonight we were not in a rhythm there.

Q. (No microphone.)

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, again, we got ourselves -- got to give the Titans credit. I felt they knocked us back a few times. We got back in get back-on-track situations. Did a nice job pushing the pockets, some of their pressures.

Again, I don't want to overreact. I'll go and look at the film, give you a clear picture of what happened, why some of those pressures were effective for them.

Q. (No microphone.)

ARTHUR SMITH: I thought defensively we were very physical. You could feel those guys out there. It was good to see Marlon have some success. A lot of those guys. You could hear the pads popping. That was encouraging.

Again, they did a nice job. They stepped up. Offensively, like I said, you get behind, poor field position, we had the sudden change there on the interception. I thought the defense did a nice job tonight.

We got to do a better job. Clearly we can't put them in bad

situations.

Q. The penalties, mistakes, seemed like they often came after a completion.

ARTHUR SMITH: That's not making excuses, but we got to see what happened. Clearly, those were after first downs. Immediately you're trying to get back on track.

Again, we got to do a better job getting these guys ready, these young guys ready to roll. We'll have a good challenge. It's time not to overreact. It's the pre-season. But we got to play cleaner. This will be a really good test for us in Miami, going down there and practicing, see if we can make some improvements.

Q. (No microphone.)

ARTHUR SMITH: It wasn't too difficult. Like I said earlier in the week, we feel like he's right on schedule. Wanted him to go through the routine of getting to the stadium, going through the warmups.

Like I said, this week is going to be big for him, going down to Miami. It's a very aggressive and very talented secondary. But like I said, Kyle is right on schedule. If we felt he was behind, probably wouldn't have put him out there.

Q. What should the focus for Jalen Mayfield be after tonight?

ARTHUR SMITH: It's good, kind of got his feet wet. We got to look at it, see how he finished, how his technique was. I got to go back and look at the penalty. Obviously those were critical errors on a third down. You convert and then you get pushed back off the penalty.

Again, I don't want to overreact till I see it. At the end of the day they called it. I guess it is what it is there.

Q. (No microphone.)

ARTHUR SMITH: He's done a nice job. Him and Earl both have. So has (indiscernible). I've been very pleased with



the inside linebacker room, Deion, Foye, Mykal Walker, Earl, Dorian. Dorian made a couple plays. Earl I thought was pretty physical, too.

It's exciting. Those guys stepped up. I'm excited about them. We just got to do a better job getting in the game down in Miami, see what we can improve. You can't overreact. It's the pre-season. These young guys need to play. That's what we wanted to do.

Clearly it wasn't good enough. That's the good thing, we get another day of practice. Thankfully those games don't count.

Q. I know it was all about the young guys, but what is the decision of not having any of the starters get a series or anything like that?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, couple factors. We got to make roster decisions by Tuesday. We felt where we're at with camp, where some of our players are at, we feel like these joint practices are one of the biggest things coming up for us down there in Miami. A lot of factors.

It will be interesting to look around the league, what everybody is doing. Saw some people played them. The Titans didn't. They played some of the back end defensive starters. Their entire offense wasn't out there. Some of their front guys.

But everybody's kind of trying to navigate the new pre-season, 17-game season. We got to make the best decisions that we feel are best for our team. We'll see how this week goes, whether we need to get them cranked up down in Miami.

Q. (No microphone.)

ARTHUR SMITH: I got to go see from Jake. I know he went in. I don't want to give you bad information.

Q. (No microphone.)

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, no, a little bit was matchup. I think they got a pretty good young player, Teair Tart. A lot of it was matchup. Josh has had a good camp, but we wanted to see him in there play against those guys.

Like I said, it's a credit to the Titans. We never really got on track, never got in a rhythm on the run game. Like I said, a lot of long yardage situations. You got to say hey. That's a good thing, at least it was the pre-season, probably forced a couple runs situationally you wouldn't have called. I felt like we needed to. We just didn't get enough snaps.

Q. (No microphone.)

ARTHUR SMITH: Right, sure, yeah, I mean. Thankfully those don't go in the record books. We didn't do enough to help AJ. You get out of rhythm, I don't want to overreact, got hit a few times, too. When you saw Feleipe come there. The thing is, AJ, the operation was a little clear, but there were no results behind that because of the entire picture of the offense in the first half. I'm not saying that. Again, you got to give the Titans credit there defensively.

The second half, Feleipe, we want to be a little better operationally. What Feleipe clearly showed is that he can extend plays. That was good to see.

Q. Back to the rookie class, asking your evaluation of some of those guys.

ARTHUR SMITH: Defensively you could feel (indiscernible). Go back, I don't want to give a snap judgment until I see the whole thing, but you could feel some of those guys. The defensive line, I thought the inside linebackers, all those guys, we could feel them. That was encouraging.

Q. (No microphone.)

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, he's had a good camp. It was good. He was a guy that is a second-year, sophomore class that didn't get the pre-season or off-season last year. Obviously he played and so did Hawkins. These reps, these game reps, are important to him as he get into the evaluation, how we piece together the 53.

Q. I saw you exchange some hugs with some players before the game.

ARTHUR SMITH: You spend a lot of time with these guys, wish them well. Obviously got to give them credit. We came out. It was great to see those guys. Seen them before. Like I say, I wished them well. I'm focused on the Falcons, getting this team better so we can go down and improve and take another step next week.

Q. What was your overall first look as far as what the special teams did overall?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, I mean, they were physical. Now, we can't give up the return. I thought a couple times operationally -- the biggest logistical challenge you have in the pre-season is on your special teams. Who is up, who is down. Play a guy a quarter, he comes down, who is the next backup.

I give the special teams coach as lot of credit. Pre-season is a bear for those guys. I thought the guys were flying around. It was good to see Avery. Tried to hit those things. We wanted to get returns tonight. That's what we asked Cam to do.

Really hard to evaluate Cam on a couple of those because he was doing what we asked him to do. I feel like you asked me that question the other day, and we want to see guys covered, so... I saw some guys, I thought we had some good guys covering down. We can be cleaner.

Q. (No microphone.)

ARTHUR SMITH: That's a tough job. It's like a backup quarterback. You are that swing tackle. He's gotten a lot of reps lately at right tackle. Going in we thought it was fair to let Jalen play right, didn't want to move Jalen, then Willie was going to be a swing tackle, ends up being the right tackle. He has to go over there and be able to do that in a pinch. We gave him reps in practice the last couple days. That's a tough job. But that is the job of the swing tackle.

I thought he did all right. I got to see what happened. A lot of times protection calls, you're sliding a certain way. Communication inside. A lot of times you ask tackles, they get beat inside, you may have to slide to expect help. Everybody says that's maybe the tackle.

Those are maybe things why I don't want to overreact. Willies has had a nice camp.

Q. Marlon Davidson, you said it was good to see him have success. Was there anything specific you were looking for that stood out to you?

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, probably why he was drafted here, he flashed as a pass-rusher. That was kind of his trait coming out. Marlon has been able to grind through some things. He dealt with a lot this year. He's kind of grinded through this camp. It's good to see him have some success.

Obviously at the line of scrimmage, how physical we play against the run, then earning some reps to go out there to rush the quarterback.

I thought Marlon did that tonight.

Q. With cutdowns coming up, how much does the game weigh versus training camp?

ARTHUR SMITH: It's all part of it. Obviously when it comes to tackling, the special teams -- I mean, the games help. That's what you want to see them doing. It's the best

thing you can do to evaluate. A lot of these guys are going for the first time. There's a lot of nerves in there. We got to take the whole picture.

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