

Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

Monday, August 30, 2021

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Coach Arthur Smith

Postgame Press Conference



Cleveland 19, Atlanta 10

ARTHUR SMITH: You guys ready to roll?

Q. Coach, decision to play Kyle and not play some of the starters, what was behind that? How did he do?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, with some of younger guys, even some of the younger guys that have played, wanted to give them a few snaps, get into a routine, and get ready for week one.

Kyle, we didn't want his first snap to be against Philly. We thought he has done a nice job all preseason. We tried to be smart with guys, evaluate those guys, and gave them a small package, let them go. Of course him and Hayden wanted to play the whole game, but you got to make those decisions.

Small sample size, but was good to get him a catch, and we'll see where we go now going into the regular season.

Q. How did Rosen do in the second half?

ARTHUR SMITH: I thought Josh handed it pretty well. Coming into a short week, he's been in it several systems, a very smart football player. We had a package for him in the game plan; he handled it well. I thought he showed his arm talent tonight.

Again, I thought he did a nice job overall.

Q. Defensively are you worried about the secondary moving forward?

ARTHUR SMITH: No, I thought the defense tonight, you know, we didn't bail them out enough situationally. Look, Cleveland made a couple plays, got a couple fourth down stops. Those are huge plays in the game, momentum changing plays. Only thing I was disappointed in was the turnover and giving the ball back and getting the penalty. We can't do that. That's a huge momentum play.

That will be addressed. That's not what we want to see, that's not who we want to be. We don't want to sit there. It's a great play by Kobe, we just got to be better operationally, and that's on me. I don't want to see that out there.

Q. Did Josh show you enough tonight to make you want to maybe see more next week?

ARTHUR SMITH: Sure, there are some things that we are going to want to watch the film, Terry and I and the whole football staff. We won't rush to judgment here. Give Josh credit. He came in here and handled it. We'll take everything into consideration. I'm not ready to make that statement right now.

So, yeah.

Q. (Regarding playing certain players for a limited time.)

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, it was all intentional. It was really to get those guys ready in there. Again, if the drive had gone differently they probably would've been there a couple plays, and we have certain package plays. Again, you got to figure out what the quarterbacks can do.

So we felt it was the best plan for Feleipe to get him going. He's a different player than Josh. That's not a knock on either one of them. To me, that's the biggest part of my job is on the problem solve. The problem obviously we didn't score enough points.

But that was by design. If we had gotten into some drives, some different situations, those guys were going to be up for the first two series. Just didn't happen to work out that way the way things played out situationally. Got back, had a second down play.

So that was the plan with those guys.

Q. (Regarding cuts.)

ARTHUR SMITH: Sure. You know, we played obviously



the last game of the preseason, so we're not going to go out there and practice tomorrow. These guys need to recover. So we'll bring them in there on Tuesday. We can adjust. Had a little bit of a short roster, but that's fine.

There is also a bye week, too. We will practice three days and they're going to have off, which they deserve and that's part of the deal. So off Friday, Saturday, Sunday, so that is part of it.

Q. Are you already planning ahead for tomorrow or Tuesday?

ARTHUR SMITH: We'll talk about that as a staff. We have a plan. I'm just not going to share that here post-game.

Q. Do you have enough clarity on the quarterbacks?

ARTHUR SMITH: Snap judgment, but I feel good right now, Jeff, but we need to look at the tape and evaluate. We're always looking at the roster. You never know who comes available.

Going to be a million calls around the league tomorrow between general managers. Not ready to make that statement. I thought for the most part Feleipe and Josh handled the plan.

Again, we got to score more points, stating the obvious. But the way they operated and the things we wanted to see out of them, they did a pretty decent job.

Q. Did some of the injuries around the league in preseason give you pause?

ARTHUR SMITH: No, you know, look, there is a lot of ways to look at it. We had a plan. We had a strategy. We started out in the preseason, and certainly I would say the thing that changed our plan was maybe a little bit, to get a longer look at Josh Rosen. So obviously unfortunate what happened to AJ McCarron so then you got to be able to adapt.

But our plan for the majority of these guys was not to play them a lot in the preseason, and that was obvious. To get a full evaluation, we got a lot of young guys that we wanted to look at and need these game reps that we may not be relying on early, but chances and odds are we need them to play at some point for us this season, especially next year, and they need those game reps.

Q. Were you ever going to play Matt?

ARTHUR SMITH: No.

Q. I guess going off that, having a plan and understanding the very limited reps for the veterans, what have they showed you over the course of the last month where you felt comfortable being like, We're ready to go?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, several things. I mean, going back to Matt, Jeff, that's not going to be necessarily the plan. You know, at some point, depends on your quarterback situation. If we felt we were inexperienced there, sure, we would play the quarterbacks. That's what every coach and everybody is paid to do to make those decisions.

So that's why we didn't play Matt going into year 14. We thought he had a good camp, we felt really good about those joint practices, and we got three opportunities. Everybody is dealing with a new situation. You got a 17-game regular season we got to get ready to play for. It's a marathon.

We wanted to get as much valuable evaluation as we could to develop guys. The only way I know how to develop quarterbacks is to let them play. That's why we wanted to make sure they had a half. Feleipe got a game and a half, and then Josh tonight got a half.

Q. Obviously with Josh, I know obviously putting together a package for him, when you look at just initial reaction to his execution of the shortened body of work, how do you feel like he was able to kind of take what you gave him and go?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, he did a good job. Like most of the players, very few people, especially in this business, are going to tell you, Hey, I want less. So that's my job, to make the decisions. The only thing, I'll put this on me, situationally you get down in the red zone, I wanted to see him throw it. Unfortunately we took the sack there.

I wanted to see him throw it, and so I conceded that. If you're a regular season game that is probably not some of the decisions I would've made, and that's the beauty of the preseason. Sometimes you feel like you're playing with house money.

Certainly everybody is entitled to your own opinion, but that's how we felt as a staff. To get an evaluation of the quarterback I was going to let him throw down there, so that's why I did that.

Q. I know you said you wanted to see clean games throughout the preseason. How pleased were you to see only four penalties in the 70 yards and really just the one on that touchdown?



ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, that was a point of emphasis. You know, that's the thing I won't do here. We're not going to complain about the rules. This game is constantly evolving, and has done a nice job with some of the things that needed to be cleaned up, and that's what the rules are. We want to coach the rules. We are not going to complain about them.

I wasn't very happy week one. Wanted to clean up some of the holds. We felt luckily, it's not perfect, but pleased at least we cut down the penalties.

Q. And also the run defense, what do you think helped about this defense just to keep the ground game in check?

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, they did a nice job, you know, setting a wall out there. It's a really good running football team. Cleveland is built pretty similar to us stylistically, and Kevin and his staff and the whole operation, they did a nice job last year. To me, that's a good football team. We knew they were going to come in and at least try to run the football for the most part. I thought our guys stepped up.

Q. After the first preseason game I remember you said Feleipe, what you learned about him is he can extend plays. Two games later, have you seen enough from him to be able to gauge what he looks like in your offense and where he fits in?

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, look, I don't have the ego to say it's my offense. This is our offense. It's the Atlanta Falcons offense. We got a really good staff and a lot of people, really good staff and players. It's our offense. My job as a coach is to make sure that it's not going to be one size fits all.

Feleipe is a completely different point in his career than Matt Ryan, than AJ McCarron, and Josh Rosen. Part of me developing him is to make sure we push him out of his comfort zone, see what he can do. But pleased with the progress he made. All different players.

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