

Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

Sunday, October 31, 2021

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Arthur Smith

Visitors Postgame Press Conference

Panthers 19, Falcons 13

Q. Coach, what did you say to the team after a loss like this?

ARTHUR SMITH: Really the message was you have to give Carolina credit. They played the way they had to. It wasn't good enough on our end, starting with me on down. That's the bottom line. They came in here and ran the ball. They shortened the game. We didn't do enough on offense. Give them credit. Turned the ball over in the Red Zone. It's usually not a good sign, and credit to Carolina.

Q. Offensively after Matt had a chance (off mic). I don't know if that was just a coincidence, or where did the offense go after that point?

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, you tell me particularly the way you thought it went to a slump. It happened on the drive. When he threw the interception and we came back down, and you got a chance, and you're in a 12-10 game, and you got a critical third down. We don't make the play. We missed the field goal. I didn't think Matt was the only thing particularly bad or great. I don't think that had any impact on it. I think that you're making something of something that really didn't, and we didn't execute better. They got after us. You got to give them credit. We didn't make enough plays.

Q. At what point did you know Calvin Ridley wasn't going to be here today?

ARTHUR SMITH: With Calvin, I believe he put out a statement. I let Calvin speak for himself. It's a personal issue. Again, I'm not going to go into many details. When we realized he wasn't going to go this morning, we made him inactive.

Q. So it was this morning that you found out?

ARTHUR SMITH: It's a lot of things, Michael. Things can change and change day to day. You guys were all at



practice Friday. Calvin said it was something personal, and it's going to remain personal on my end. Calvin's statement speaks for him, and when we got here today, we talked and we put him inactive.

Q. How does this change what you are maybe are able to do over the next few weeks? As he said, he is stepping away, it's not clear when --

ARTHUR SMITH: It's like any other injury, Michael. No different than when we got off the plane in London. We've got to find a way to win. We've got to find a way to execute better offensively. There's no excuses. Everybody, it's the NFL. There's injuries come up. Things come up. We've got to find a way.

Q. And at the end of the first half that last drive, you had 1:44 left when you got the ball. You ran the ball twice, and then Matt scrambled. What was the strategy there in terms of trying to --

ARTHUR SMITH: It's simple. We ripped off a pretty good run. You're playing the game within the game. We get the ball right of after half, Michael. You're looking at the end of result. We didn't execute it. They bulldozed the run. You run the first down, and right into it. Give them credit. We didn't execute well. They had a free hitter. I'll go back and look at the tape. I'm pretty damn sure what happened. You get a negative play, and then we went for it. You went on the third down. It wasn't like it was run-run screen. You're trying to make more than it is. Give them credit. When you get in there, we have three time-outs, right? Plenty of time to go down and score. It created a negative play.

Q. As far as the down field passing game goes, it seems like Matt's only has so many intermediary and short routes to go. Is that something that's a big concern to you right now?

ARTHUR SMITH: Did you see last week?

Q. Well, yeah, but I --

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, it happened this week too. We



tried to press the ball. You have to give him credit. There's also something that's called a pass rush speeds it up. That's another false narrative. We did. We tried to go right at him. Give him credit. They executed.

Q. 203 rushing yards for Carolina. You said that was their game plan coming in. Does the fact that them executing that same plan what did you kind of need from the defense moving on?

ARTHUR SMITH: They shortened the game out incredibly. Credit to them. They were physical. They ran the ball. They kept it in a lot of third and shorts. They went 10 for 7 on third down. At the end of the day as ugly as that felt they scored 19 points. We got to do more offensively. We are in the National Football League, and we have to score more than 13 points. I know it was ugly. We got to do better. We'll look at the tape. We got to stop the run. Give them credit. On the flip side, you got to give their credit defense credit. We didn't do enough. We didn't do things well enough to win that game.

Q. Did you feel like -- I know 30 for 10 on third down today with the offense. Did you feel like you all are putting yourselves in good enough on first and second downs, or was it a disconnect on third down?

ARTHUR SMITH: We had more intermediate third downs than we did a week ago. Combination of things. I didn't think we were clean enough. It starts with me. I have to do a better job coaching. Give them credit, and like I said, they covered us. We didn't do a good job being open. Probably rushed through, so maybe that's why it looked like there was intermediate. Didn't look like he had a lot of time back there either. Good rush group.

Q. With Calvin's absence, obviously, you had planned for him to be here. How much did him not being here affect the way you were able to call the game and the way that they played you, do you think? Could you see a difference in what they were able to --

ARTHUR SMITH: Probably a little bit. Maybe the way they matched the man. You have to ask Matt Rhule or Phil Snow that one. That would be the biggest difference to be how they matched defensively. It's like you got to have contingency plans the guy goes out to the first play of the game. Whether it's receivers, quarterback, tight end, better have contingency plans. If I had to guess, best educated guess going to be probably affect their man coverage play.

Q. The hit on Robby Anderson, it looked like things got a little heated there. Did you get a good gauge, a good view on that hit?

ARTHUR SMITH: I thought it was a clean hit. I thought the refs did a nice job. Usually now, you know, they've done a nice job taking the long chain ahead out of the game, and hit him right in the middle part. It's a good clean hit by Eric. It's football. It's an emotional game, and what I didn't want to see is all the chirping. I don't want to see that from our team.

Q. Did you notice any differences in Kyle today despite the lack of production that you have seen in him?

ARTHUR SMITH: He did a nice job covering. He is a rookie. Like I said, you guys want to go ahead and bronze bust for him. We went through this. They a good game plan. I'll go back and look at the tape certainly. Tried to go after him, and they did a good job of covering him. We got a couple of plays and made a couple of nice plays. He is not going to go 200 yards every game. We have other guys that can move the football and score. Give him credit.

Q. Is this the same personal issue Calvin had a couple of weeks ago, and if so --

ARTHUR SMITH: I'll let Calvin's statement speak for him. I'm not going to speak for another player or another coach when it comes to personal issues.

Q. Coach, what are some of the thoughts that lead you to say you got to do more offensively? How can you do more offensively?

COACH: There are certain -- you know, that's a part of coaching, right? We'll go back and look at it. Like I said, they did a nice job. We made some adjustments. They made more plays than we did. We have to look at it and see where we go from here. It's going to be that way every week. That's a better defense when Shaq Thompson is in there. Added Gilmore in there. Played some man coverage. Matched him up on Kyle. So we'll go back there and look at it. There's a lot of ways to go. It's one game. We got ten to go. We have a long, long season ahead of us. 3-4. Not where we want to be, but we have a lot of football.

Q. Sam looked like -- is that just something at this point that almost there's a flaw on the defense, or is there something in your defense that doesn't really --

ARTHUR SMITH: You're talking a million different variables. There's a lot of athletic quarterbacks in this league. Certainly he didn't drop back a ton. A lot of times it can be the rush lanes. You may get in pressure. They may block you. When you play man coverage, different

variations of man coverage and nobody is open sometimes, they turn their back, if they pass off a game, you may have a certain pressure called. There may be a lane, and we didn't keep them in there. Obviously, he did a nice job extending those, that third down.

Q. Are there moments or plays that you can point to where you felt like things were turning in the wrong direction?

ARTHUR SMITH: It's an NFL game. It's a 12-10 game in the fourth quarter. We're right there on the fringe. We don't catch a third down. We miss a field goal. It wasn't the prettiest game offensively. Worse we get it 13-12. Who knows? It affects the play-calling. There's a cause and effect. The momentum is real in football, and there is a cause and effect. If you can find a way to get a lead right there, who knows, right? You'll never know. It didn't happen. We dropped it, and missed the field goal. Thank you.

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