

Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

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Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Coach Arthur Smith Postgame Press Conference



Falcons 20, Lions 16

ARTHUR SMITH: All right, just before I get started here, I just wanted to -- like a lot of people in the Atlanta area in the football community, we were saddened to hear about Robby Roper, the Roswell quarterback and the community and his family. Just want to send my condolences.

And then on another note, it was really nice to get a win at home here. I appreciate our fans. Our fans have been great all year as we -- especially a lot of our fans that traveled, Carolina, Jacksonville, and it was good to reward them with a home win.

Q. Could you discuss the play of Foye?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, that's what D-line, that's kind of been our ethos: Find a way to win. I believe, fact check me here, that puts us at 7-2 in one-possession games, so that's what we're trying to create a culture of winning, playing as a team, playing some more situational football.

Obviously there at the end they were in cover zero so we got to check the one and obviously the ball came out, but I've got all the faith in the world in Russ and our team. If you see the mindset, there was no long faces. Our defense went back out there, grinded it out. We preach situational football. Made them earn it, and Foye came up with a big play there.

Q. Throughout the course of the game the Ryan-to-Pitts combination (indiscernible) paired up?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, you've got to give Detroit credit here. They've playing good football of late. They were going to shorten this game down. We knew possessions were going to be limited, so when we stumbled to start the game, it was going to be their kind of game. They were going to basically play four-minute offense.

I believe they had the ball for 38 minutes, so we needed to be really efficient. Possessions were limited when we

stumbled, but that's what you have to do. You have to adjust. I saw a couple things, we adjusted, got a couple looks in the second half, able to push the ball down the field, and it was a good job by Matt and Kyle and the entire team.

Q. Talk about Matt's play today; that was his 356th touchdown pass, which ties him with Eli Manning.

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, there's not a lot of guys like Matt Ryan. He's a joy to coach. He's tough. Low maintenance. For a guy of his caliber, I can't say enough good things about Matt.

Q. You mentioned the cover zero at the end. How much of that was just kind of knowing what --

ARTHUR SMITH: It's not knowing. You're just playing situational football. That's not a shot at anybody. That's not me saying how smart we are, and it's just pretty standard issue. You're in four-minute with that situation. They've got one time out. They're going to want to get the ball to come out. A couple different looks there. They sacked us on a zero look on an early 3rd down on 3rd and long, so it wasn't -- they weren't disguising it. It's pretty standard issue in the National Football League. We got the look and they executed better than we did at the end of the play.

Q. With Cordarrelle, have teams maybe started to figure him out a little bit in terms of what you guys are doing?

ARTHUR SMITH: No. I know that's a simmering hot take. Cordarrelle is a big part of the offense. Today he scored a touchdown again today. Again, they can't -- they're able to play the match-up game. If you want to give a certain -- you want to roll over here to Kyle to CP, great, as long as he had a couple big completions, Russ, that's what we are, a team that's trying to improve and get better. Sorry it was a hot take.

Q. Since he had initially had this much work as an offensive player in the past, I'm not sure whether that was part of --



ARTHUR SMITH: No, it's the NFL. There's an evolution that happens during the season. There's a lot of things that evolve. It's a huge part of our offense, like I said, got another touchdown today. I believe that's his 11th of the season.

Q. Your fourth quarter time out, simply a matter of giving your guys a breather or did you see something

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ARTHUR SMITH: No, I'm not going to get into our strategy there. There's a lot of things at play there when you get in there and you play the game where you want to get the ball back, you give yourselves a chance or are you going to put it all on the last play. They had to have a touchdown to win. Fully aware of that. There's several factors there, and I'm not going to get into specifics. There are a lot of variables that could come up where you feel the need to do that or save time or vice versa when they -- the last time-out, do you want to put pressure on them to get the call in, not bail them out. There's a lot of things they've got to -- these are all talked about beforehand while we continually look at situation. Never perfect, but you've got to be aware and be involved in every part of that game.

Q. Going back to what you were talking about after the fumble, you said you felt confident in sending that defense out there. Can you kind of walk me through that feeling of having that situational moment kind of --

ARTHUR SMITH: I think that shows growth from where we've come from earlier in the season. Like I said, the defense is on the field for 38 minutes, and give credit to Detroit. We understood what kind of game it was going to be, and they did a couple things where they're going to turn that clock out, but it felt like four-minute offense for a lot of the game, and that's why they've gotten better. You've got to give them credit. They've been in a lot of close football games. They've won two of the last three coming in here, and so they're going to run the ball on 3rd and 5, 3rd and 6, the clock is moving.

So the defense has been out there says a lot about them. I've been a part of teams, defense, they're sitting there dragging. The offense has a chance to go in the game. Again, it didn't happen that way, but I love the energy they came back out on the field with.

Q. Can you talk about your red zone play today, a lot better on offense?

ARTHUR SMITH: We try to score every week. Like I say, I keep saying this and maybe people roll their eyes, it's a strategy game. You go in there, there's a lot of variables

with 22 players out there, one thing can throw you off. You may sit there and say, hey, we've got guys wide open. Well, great, their D-lineman made a play or whatever happens. They cover, the defense does have a say. I thought we were better in situational football. That certainly helped us red zone defense, red zone offense, and usually when you win, it usually goes your way.

Q. What do you think Pitts has been doing the last three, four weeks that's kind of allowing for more production?

ARTHUR SMITH: It's a long season for a rookie. Like I said, he's just scratching the surface. He made the Pro Bowl. He broke a franchise record, most stars in a season by a tight end, and he's just getting started. He's a rookie. It's a long, long year in the life.

I appreciate the question. It's a good question. But sometimes the obvious answer, there's lulls in the season, and he has the right mindset. That's why he's fun to coach. Like I said, I told him the other day when he made the Pro Bowl, he's just scratching the surface. If he can continue to improve, we'll see where this thing goes.

Q. Have you seen teams or has he adjusted to the team dynamic?

ARTHUR SMITH: It just depends. Every game is a different story, what their coverage plan is, their 3rd down plan is. That's the fun part of coaching, move him around and then make adjustments, communicate. It's pretty much standard operating procedure in the National Football League. Credit to him. Really it's just a long year for those rookies. Jalen Mayfield is taking damn near every snap as a rookie. It's just a long journey, and I'm proud of those guys. Here we are going into week 17 with another big game coming up Sunday up in Buffalo.

Q. Richie Grant was making big plays out there; can you talk about his development?

ARTHUR SMITH: Sure, yeah. Like this whole rookie class -- they've all contributed. They've all -- it's a long journey, and we had two veteran safeties and we understood that going into this thing. That's why we played these guys again. Strategy going into the preseason, why we needed to play all these guys that never played a snap in the NFL, because you're going to get in the season and this is what happens. That's where Richie is. He made a big impact early in the season on special teams, now he's starting to make an impact on defense. His journey is beginning, too. We've all seen it. The rookies that come out, and you never hear from them again after year one. We want our guys to improve and get better year over year, the entire

team. Obviously things come up, and that'll be the goal every season.

Q. From a protection standpoint did you make any changes after the first series?

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, both, but the one -- I guess they got credit for the one, that rule there, if you're an offensive coach with a no-yard gain when he runs out, I guess credit to them. I'd love to know where the evolution of that one came from, but I'm sure there's some defensive guys that pushed that through. D-Led maybe can tell me that one. So they made a play one-on-one. The next one came on an all-out pressure and we didn't get the ball out. That's kind of what happened.

Q. Short yardage more successful today. Anything behind that other than --

ARTHUR SMITH: You go back, look at the games we played well, we played well situationally. Short yardage, red zone. Again, I know another scorching hot take. When you've got recency bias, when you get down there like we stalled out last weekend, sure, you clump numbers together, clump them together today, pretty damn good. But that's story when you win or you lose. Can you -- like not to have turnovers; obviously we had the one late. Can you win up front. Can you handle situational football. That's where most of these games come down to in the National Football League.

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