

Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

Sunday, January 9, 2022
Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Coach Arthur Smith Postgame Press Conference



Falcons 20, Saints 30

Q. Coach, regarding turnovers...

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, that's usually the story of the game. Obviously I was disappointed turning the ball over three times. All of them were at the start of a drive. Put the defense out there in a lot of the bad spots.

We battled, but with turnover margins like that, you can hand them things, that's usually the way it goes. We fought. Tried to do everything we could to get back in this football game. Our team doesn't quit, but obviously we came up short.

Q. (Regarding run defense today.)

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, I mean, they grinded it out. Like I said, when you hand them the ball right back it's usually an advantage to the offense.

I give New Orleans credit. They executed a game plan.

Q. The season is over now. What was your initial statement to the team or overall heading into the off season?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, there will be a time and place for that starting tomorrow. My message to these guys, I was appreciative of everything they've done. Obviously we came up short of our own goals here, but this team, you know, we learned how to win close games. We scrapped and clawed. Feel like we've had a good foundation and better days are ahead.

Q. (Regarding reports about the team on the Internet.)

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, I mean, look, I'm not going to -- internet, you can find whatever you want on the internet.

Q. (No microphone.)

ARTHUR SMITH: Great, I'm not discrediting anyone, but I can tell you this: 100% fact there was a lot of nonsense that came out in the spring. You know, how you want to insinuate things, no different than the Calvin Ridley question from last week. There is not a football decision that's made with the Atlanta Falcons without Terry Fontenot and myself collaborating. That's just absolute nonsense, Michael. Absolute 100% nonsense. It'll never happen.

We are not a -- we're not professional politicians. We don't operate that way. I know a lot of the league likes to leak rumors. That's not how Terry and I operate.

I know there are a lot of respected people. They got a job to do, but that's just not what happens. Again, life is a lot better when you're not on social media.

Q. Well, I wish that could be the case.

ARTHUR SMITH: I know you got a job. Just don't look at your mentions, Michael.

Q. I unfortunately have to. Let me ask this a little bit more directly. Do you expect Matt Ryan to be your quarterback next year?

ARTHUR SMITH: Michael, to sit here -- Matt knows how we feel about him, but you're not going to get a hot take from me today to ever back ourselves into a corner. I don't care -- everything is evaluated every year, and that's the way it goes in the NFL.

To make a grand statement right after a game, we're all on the same page. Do I have to declare that Kyle Pitts will be our tight end for us next year? You want me to declare that? Where you want me to go? I can go down the whole roster.

We don't want to back ourselves into a corner. I know you got to ask the question. I appreciate it. But we'll take a fair evaluation of everybody, top to bottom ever single year.

Q. How do you feel about the way Matt's played this year?



ARTHUR SMITH: I'll say this about Matt, and this is what I preach about Matt. From the outside looking in, he's always had a lot invested in the perimeter. There has been a lot of good skill players on the outside the first part of his career, everything.

This is what he proved is he can win, and we did it with a lot of different guys contributing. And so that says a lot about him. A lot of quarterbacks look pretty good when they got first round picks, Hall of Fame guys outside, from Gonzalez, Roddy Wright, when they drafted Julio he was really the third or fourth guys, he got into it, he become obviously a premier player. You had Austin Hooper, you know, obviously Kyle came in here and was forced into a role by circumstance, and we did it with a lot of guys that fought every single damn week. We found different ways, put Cordarrelle Patterson out there, tried to do everything we could to win the football game, and Matt proved that he didn't have to do it with nothing but first rounders out there.

I think that says a lot about a quarterback.

Q. Mike got a bigger share than score Cordarrelle today.

ARTHUR SMITH: We only had 19 plays in the first half. Everybody is going through something, Josh, so there is a lot of packages and this and that. We had guys that - it's week 18, so, again, there was only 19 plays. CP is obviously a big part of the game plan. We need more offensive plays. It's been the story the last five games.

Like I said, we found ways to win some games, but we need to do a better job being a little more balanced, which we will.

Q. Talking about lack of offensive plays, going back to the turnovers on the first play drives, how costly was that to the overall flow of the game?

ARTHUR SMITH: It's hard to get into a rhythm. We took a shot down their sideline that got picked, and then we had two fumbles to start drives as well, getting the ball in plus territory.

Those definitely put your defense in a bind. That was the difference in the game.

Q. This may be more of a question for when we talk to you on Tuesday, but in what ways have the last couple games down the stretch shown you and Terry what areas you need to focus mostly on in the off-season?

ARTHUR SMITH: I think you take the whole body of work.

Certainly that's why -- it's such a long season. You do find out a lot about players as you go through it, which guys you can depend on as the season finishes.

Q. What impact, if any, did the extra week this year have on the team?

ARTHUR SMITH: I mean, everybody dealt with it, but, you know, normally you feel this time of year if you're practicing, you're getting ready for wildcard game. Everybody is dealing with the same thing, but certainly you go back and look, and is there something you could do differently, I think everybody should say, Hey, how can we improve?

Certainly with the roster it definitely adds up.

Q. New Orleans do anything specifically with Kyle today?

ARTHUR SMITH: He was fighting through stuff. He gave everything. I don't think a lot of guys would've played in his circumstance. We certainly tried, and I'm sure you'll get the hot takes about the target, he was the primary in a lot of play calls. I don't know if they took him away.

But I can sit here and look at it and say he wasn't 100%, but I appreciate him going out there and trying to help us.

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