

# Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

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Atlanta, Georgia, USA

## Terry Fontenot

## Arthur Smith

### Draft Press Conference



TERRY FONTENOT: So we are excited about our three picks today. We got better. Excited about all eight of our picks, but today we got better.

Starting with the running back, Tyler. Four down player, first and second down, the way he can run the ball, third down, he can catch and protect. Fourth down, the value he brings in the kicking game, fits in our ethos, check all the boxes. And we are excited to bring him in this building, and he's excited to be here.

Then big Justin, adding a big, powerful offensive lineman with the right makeup, another Cedar Grove, local. He said that DeAngelo is his cousin, I don't know if that's a play cousin or a real first -- that's what he told me. That's what he told me.

But he's excited. And both those guys, bringing them home, they are excited to compete for the team.

And then we get a big tight end, also local, and then we have a clear vision for what he's going to be, top makeup, big athletic man. So there's not a lot of men that big walking around and can move like that, so we are really excited.

Again, all eight picks, three picks today, we really helped this football team. And now once the Draft ends, we'll get into the eighth round, and we're going to continue to add good football players.

We keep talking about our scouting staff and our coaches and all the work that goes into it, and they really grind through this free agency process as well. So I know we are going to continue to add some good football players. We're excited.

**Q. What's your vision for a kid like Tyler, a lot of tape, a lot of production the last couple years.**

ARTHUR SMITH: Great football player. We expect him -- certainly he'll be in that room. Jobs are wide open, right. We know his first, second down production. With all the backs, it's a different game to protect in the NFL, and you're betting on the makeup and athletic ability and spatial awareness that he has. It's something we'll have to develop.

We love his yards after contact. Love the mental makeup. Think he's a guy that should come in here, if he's not contributing on first, second down right away, he's a guy hopefully helps us on fourth down. But the opportunity is there. The running back room, wide open.

Shaffer, loved his 40 time, so we selected him at guard. He's a big nasty mauler --

TERRY FONTENOT: That was for you. I don't know if you caught that or not. Looked right into his phone.

ARTHUR SMITH: Obviously big John. We are excited. They add -- we talk about the ethos around here, our culture, that's the makeup, the guys that love football, that are competitive, guys that have functional football intelligence and are coming in here to compete, and they are going to continue to work to improve.

That's what we are looking for with these type of players. I thought the entire football staff, they knocked it out of the park this week. It's really awesome, we talked about being collaborative, and my hat's off to them.

**Q. This may be a reach, but when I'm looking at this overall draft class, it seemed like you picked a lot of guys with a chip on their shoulder. Was that by design? Are those the type of players you're looking for?**

TERRY FONTENOT: Well, we are looking for players that have that kind of makeup and that compete that way. And so it's not just -- we always say makeup. We are not just talking about good human beings, good people, we want guys that get on the football field and fight and compete.

So when you're looking for those types of guys, every



single one of them -- I don't know if you said Drake London, that guy has a chip on his shoulder. Every single one of them. Our head coach has a chip on shoulder. You look around the building, the staff, every day we come in with something to prove.

So you want people around you like that. We want people in our locker room like that. We have a good locker room. We have a lot of players here that come in every day and compete, and so we need to add to that.

So it's not a stretch. We try to bring in a certain type of player, and couldn't be more excited about this class.

**Q. The Atlanta connection --**

ARTHUR SMITH: It's a happy accident. It's always great, but that's not the reason we drafted them. We drafted them because they are good football players, and that's what we're looking for.

D. Led, this is not intellectual property. This is not a trade secret that you failed to mention as the fourth part of the intellectual property, but we won't worry about the details there. But this one is a Georgia pro day, I feel fine, public knowledge, 809, three-cone.

TERRY FONTENOT: Look at your chart and see where that fits?

ARTHUR SMITH: I can give that way because that was at pro day. We got that. That gets shared. That gets shared. It's a trade secret, I told you. You forgot to mention that, the fourth part, but nobody is counting.

TERRY FONTENOT: That's not by design, and yet there's so much home-grown talent here. And same thing after the Draft, and once we start working on that eighth round, hopefully we get some more. But when you go through the pool of prospects, there's a lot of good football that's played here. We talked about high school games that we want to go to and we want to go because, when you go to high school games here, you're going to be watching players that are going to be playing on Sunday.

When you go through that process, naturally, whether they play at one of the local schools or -- but there's a lot of home-grown talent here, and we are excited to get some in the building.

**Q. Did any of them go to the local day?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, a few of them went to local day.

**Q. Did you draft them in?**

ARTHUR SMITH: You have the list --

TERRY FONTENOT: You didn't get the local list? I don't know why we wouldn't just invite them to the local day? I don't understand why we wouldn't do that.

ARTHUR SMITH: Scouting subscription service?

TERRY FONTENOT: Audacity, man.

**Q. How do y'all identify, there's makeup and toughness, but how do you identify it? Is it just the tape? Is it just what they do on film? Are there certain markers you look for in the way they play?**

ARTHUR SMITH: It's really everything. It's a body of work. You're right, you're asking for a subjective grade, but that's what -- the scouts do a good job. It's a collaborative process. It's like when you hire somebody, your résumé, what are you looking for, are you looking for the standardized test or a body of work? Know what you're getting. It's the whole makeup. Their habits every day. That's what you're digging into, looking, watching, collecting information.

TERRY FONTENOT: It's the total picture, that first boots on the ground, area scout that's in that building, they are talking to everyone in the building. They are watching them in practice. Arthur wants to know, hey, how does he practice, right, because it's not just about guys that you don't flip the switch and do it in a game. You have to do it every day.

So scouts are in the schools, seeing in practice, seeing the way they compete on the practice field, talking to everyone in that building and knowing what they get. But again, now you go through the process of the All-Star games and the combines, the pro days, the workouts, and it's the total picture.

We don't have lazy scouts that just go talk to one person in the building and they tell them stuff and they turn that into us, no. They do all their digging, and it's A to Z. But it has to come together. So like Arthur said, it's the whole picture.

**Q. When you studied tape on Tyler, in addition to his school records for yards, big number of carries this season, did you see a guy that got stronger? 276 carries?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Watch that Bowl game he played. That will tell you everything you need to know about him. That will answer that.



**Q. Four plus one --**

ARTHUR SMITH: What did your TV scout say?

**Q. And college football --**

TERRY FONTENOT: His production this year, you're right, his production was unreal. He's been a productive player, but this season it went to another level.

ARTHUR SMITH: I say that because that shows you a lot. I wasn't trying to be rude about it. That's why we have conviction about it. Apologize. That came across as -- no, I wasn't trying to be curt with you, but that tells you everything, how the guy finished the season.

**Q. Sticking with Tyler, both of you mentioned him on third downs. He suggested he was underutilized because of BYU's offense. Do you feel there's more there to be shown?**

ARTHUR SMITH: With all our players, like it's great, it feels like he was underused at BYU. He comes here, he's going to have an opportunity to earn it.

It's good. He wants to do it. But there's a lot of jobs that job description is to be a running back, a lot of things we ask him to do. If he can do that, he'll make himself a very valuable player on this football team.

**Q. And his run style and just breaking tackles and the way he plays, how does that specifically fit the culture?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Pretty apparent, the guy likes to run through people. Yards after contact. The guy, this year he had 40 runs of ten-plus yards. A lot of things. He can create explosive plays, he grinds out runs. He's a guy that gets stronger, the volume. That's a rare trait that a lot of people, maybe you value, maybe you don't, but certainly when you want to close games out, you like guys that can play strong in the fourth quarter.

TERRY FONTENOT: If you're smart and tough and you're going to work at your craft and take the coaching, however much you did on third downs, you're going to continue to improve. Same thing on fourth down. If you're smart, you're tough and you're competitive, then you're going to -- because everyone here, you're going to play on special teams. Regardless of how much guys did in college, you're going to project to do well in those areas.

**Q. Seems like with the guys you've added in this draft and also the veterans you brought in, that you guys**

**are creating a lot of position battles and a very competitive environment. I'm sure that's by design. Is that the environment you're looking to foster during the spring and summer?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Absolutely.

**Q. What about the offensive line specifically? It seems like guard and tackle, but if it's veterans or a guy that you just brought in, could those be open competitions?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, obviously you invest at certain spots, we know that. But at the end of the day, you've got to produce in this business. So that's what you want. You don't want people that really get complacent.

It's a tough job, we all know that, but that's by design. Terry and his staff do a great job of doing that. They churn the roster and look all around. Think of the production we got last year out of guys like Rush and Pennel that were not in camp with us, and they helped us. It's a never-ending process.

**Q. If I can circle back to yesterday's subject, Arthur, you mentioned you feel like Marcus as the veteran is I-A at this point and you let Desmond compete, do you see value in getting Desmond on the field this year in some role, just so you know what you've got?**

ARTHUR SMITH: I'm not going to sit here and speculate about some kind of -- fit a narrative of some kind of quarterback controversy or give you our plan of development. We'll see what it looks like when he gets here, with all of our guys. We have to see what he looks like. Got to go earn a job.

If you're asking we are going to all of a sudden package for him, we'll see. We have a long way to go till September. I'm not going to sit up here and speculate right now.

**Q. Looks like in a game, as you think about your long-term quarterback plan?**

ARTHUR SMITH: See how it works out. I'm not going to sit here and tell you our long-term, short-term plan. We'll let it play out. I know you want to see behind the scenes, but it will play itself out. You guys will be able to watch it.

**Q. Looking forward to putting in the new plan?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, can't wait.

**Q. Justin Shaffer, I don't know where to put him, played left and right?**



TERRY FONTENOT: Where do you think he fits best?

**Q. Depends, well, he played left and right, so I will start there. I don't know if he needs to -- so many people active, you have to have a center, too, so he has to do that. I would probably leave him at left?**

TERRY FONTENOT: Again, I just think we should just bring him in the staff room for the meetings when we're talking.

ARTHUR SMITH: I'll call his agent.

**Q. Put Mayfield at right tackle and have a war over there, see who is going to be --**

ARTHUR SMITH: Counting out the other guys that we brought in, too?

**Q. I want competition.**

ARTHUR SMITH: Josh was asking about the quarterback.

**Q. Overall comments, it looked like a strong class that still don't address the needs, even though you said you were doing best player available, kind of best of both worlds --**

ARTHUR SMITH: Did you do that by design?

TERRY FONTENOT: I didn't do that by design, but look, Arthur said it, that, hey, you always want to take the best player off the board, and you don't want to reach. And yet, when you're going through the board, there are times you're going to have players in the same category and you can lean more towards a certain position.

But yeah, we had a plan coming into the day and -- or coming into Thursday. We are really excited. We couldn't be more excited right now. And again, it's eighth round. We are going to keep adding players. There's still some good football players. When we turned in our last card, there were more football players on that board that we're going to work hard to get if they don't get drafted. We're excited. We really are.

**Q. Y'all call it the eighth round?**

TERRY FONTENOT: Eighth round picks. Once they get here, it doesn't matter. Doesn't matter how they got here. It's competition at every position.

**Q. Did you need to get through the Draft to make your final determinations on contracts?**

TERRY FONTENOT: No, we have constantly talked about it. And so, no, the Draft wasn't going to affect that decision.

**Q. Would you like to announce those now?**

TERRY FONTENOT: No. No.

ARTHUR SMITH: I don't ever fault you guys for trying. I appreciate it. You guys got a hard job. One thing I'll say, you have a hard job. But there are certain things, Terry has a process he wants to go through and we're going to stick to. Don't ever mind you guys asking, though.

**Q. Is this a time of the year that you and your staff like, now that you have the draft picks in and you can start teaching?**

ARTHUR SMITH: I get fired up. It's what we get paid to do. It's what we are passionate about. They line the fields now, you get to do a little bit of phase 2 work. And OTAs and get ready for training camp.

**Q. Kaiden had on a Drake London USC jersey. Did you get that for him?**

TERRY FONTENOT: I did. I got that for him. He's a big jersey guy, but I told him he couldn't put it on until we drafted him. He couldn't wear it to school unless he saw we drafted him or not.

**Q. What's it like --**

TERRY FONTENOT: It's so special. Our families, we want him around as much as possible. We are a family organization. Last weekend or weekend before last, Arthur had his boys, running around the field, playing catch with him.

It's important. We, the coaches, the scouts, the whole staff, everybody in the building works hard, and so you've got to have your families around. They have got to be a part of it.

It's funny, we all say balance, it's not balanced when you do these things. You can't really be balanced. But you have your family to be a part of it. And we have a great organization, that there's some places that it wouldn't be normal to have a 10-year-old running around the draft room, but starting with Arthur, he's obviously a big-time family guy, and Arthur Smith, family guy, and so when the leadership of the organization, Rich McKay, family guy, when that's the leadership of the organization, then it's normal for families to be around, and that means a lot.

That's the kind of organization I want to be part of.

**Q. This scouting process is so long, what's it like to get to this point right here after all the work by so many people?**

TERRY FONTENOT: Yeah, again, it's really exciting. We spend so much time talking about these guys and working with these guys and again, so many scouts that work so hard and coaches that work and staff that work so hard through this process, and you really get to know these players, and you want them. Once you determine your stack, and then you're on the clock or you're leading up to your pick and you're five or six picks away, the juice starts going and you want those guys and you want to pull those guys off the board.

So it's really exciting because you know them. And then so now you get them in the building and you get going, it's exciting.

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