

Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

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Arthur Smith

Postgame Press Conference



Atlanta - 28, Jacksonville - 12

ARTHUR SMITH: I appreciate their effort the entire spring, summer, camp. We've got some tough decisions ahead of us, but I'm always thankful for those guys' efforts. Regardless it's pro footballers, I get paid, these guys have worked extremely hard, and this was a good way to cap the preseason for us. Preseason or not, it's good to get a win at home.

Q. Coach, could you discuss the play of Desmond Ridder today with four touchdown drives.

ARTHUR SMITH: That's why you need to play these guys. There's no way to develop. You can simulate things in practice. You teach them lessons, but sometimes the best thing to do is to go out there and play and work through it. You're going to find out a lot about people.

First play of the game, we had one guy in front go the wrong way, and he let one mistake become two, trying to play hero ball. You can live to the next down. So he understood that. He didn't pout. Comes out the next try, and I thought he was very solid.

Then we didn't have -- we lost a couple of situational things on third down or didn't handle overcoming a backed up on a penalty. Then the last one, I wanted to launch one before the half, he had to move in the pocket. He had to reset because I thought we had a chance with Frankie. Frankie had a good move on that. Thought we'd give him a chance.

End of the half, who cares? There's a lot of guys, they care more about social media, stats, whatever it is, and Desmond is a real football player. You got to come out and keep swinging and keep things in perspective.

You can put one on me, moving, trying to get the play before the half, see if we can launch one.

I was proud of these guys. We won a game in all three

phases. Pinion punted well. Obviously, Q. Bell, defense handled sudden change, and made them kick field goals, and we were able to score touchdowns in the red zone. That's the name of the game.

Q. Any update on Etheridge?

ARTHUR SMITH: We have to see. Any time someone gets carted off are, it looks bad. Not to be evasive, but we won't know until the doctor's looked at him, and we're very hopeful, but we'll have to see.

Q. Can you describe what you saw from your running backs that will either make it difficult or easier in your final decisions for the roster?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, they ran hard, but it takes all 11 of us in the run game. Quarterback to get us in the right look. We put a lot on the quarterback. That's why I'm pushing Des so hard. A lot more than just calling runs we ask our guys to do.

I thought the line, the receivers, they blocked. As a play caller, you're able to get a lead, and you get these guys in a flow, and there's nothing I enjoy more. Maybe I'm messed up in the head because I was a lineman, but that's pretty to me when you're in the fourth quarter and you got a lead and watching these guys come off the ball and churning off two-yard runs to eight, to nine.

Huntley popped a big one, but it takes all 11 to run the football for us.

Q. You talk about the decisions of the next coming days. What does the next coming days look like for your coaching staff and the front office?

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, it's our football staff. That's what we call ourselves, a football staff. We're a team. We've got a lot of work ahead of us. Again, there's a lot more transactions, the way this thing's going to go. A lot more mechanisms now that you can use. You're just going to have to let it play out because you're able to get more guys on the practice squad, different mechanisms.

What may look like the roster on Wednesday may look a little bit different on Thursday and so on.

Q. This defensive line, it really felt like it was a big game for them, in terms of you all deciding what you all have depth-wise. How do you feel like this defensive interior played today?

ARTHUR SMITH: It was exciting. A lot of it too, it's not just the sacks, but it's when you're running certain pressure packages or games, everyone being coordinated on the same page so you don't open rush lanes or you don't lose contain. Guys get the ball out.

Even Troy, he was upset with himself, he needs to make that play. But guys kept finishing, effort, and he was still able to get the ball out. He threw it up, and Nate Landman was able to pick it off.

Q. With decisions you have to make with that group specifically, I know you said the other day you're looking for guys you can trust. Do you feel like you have that now with this group?

ARTHUR SMITH: I do.

Q. Personally I would be remiss on not congratulating you to be the first Falcons coach to win a preseason game at Mercedes Benz Stadium. Previously you mentioned the home field. You talked about it at the practice here. As you said it's only a preseason game, but how important just establishing a winning culture at home?

ARTHUR SMITH: Very important.

Q. Which has not been the case the last few years.

ARTHUR SMITH: Can't live in the past or get anxious about it. What we're trying to build is something real, and it's going to happen organically. We're going to do our part. I love our fans. They come out here passionate. The city loves the Falcons.

We've got to get people coming here so it can be like a big party on Sundays. But we've got to do our part. It will happen organically, and we've got to do our part and build a winning culture and do things the right way because this place, I promise you, will be rocking when we get this thing rolling.

Q. Coach, you already answered this a little bit, but how beneficial is it that Desmond Ridder got all the way to the fourth quarter and he was able to play a lot of football today?

ARTHUR SMITH: It's huge. That was our strategy going in. I feel about as good as you can to execute the strategy in preseason. What we wanted to accomplish, playing everybody, joint practices, the competition that we had, and there's a reason why.

Feleipe, I let him pick the ball up once. I thought he threw a pretty good ball there at the end. But you can't get enough reps. We're trying to develop these quarterbacks and get Marcus going again. They took a ton of reps, those two guys.

We were able to use the preseason the right way. It wasn't perfect, but he got better every time he went out there.

Q. Do you feel good about what you've seen with Desmond?

ARTHUR SMITH: I feel good about what I've seen with Marcus and all the offensive players too.

Q. Coach, could you talk about getting Deion and Isaiah Oliver some action?

ARTHUR SMITH: Absolutely. Those guys, they're on different return to play. They're not on the same timetable. That's why their energy is different.

I was really pleased with Isaiah. Sometimes it's not just a physical hurdle, it's a mental hurdle. Whether you guys may not realize it or nobody in the stands, but Dean called the same call that Zay blitzed on and got hurt against Washington. Sometimes you need to overcome it.

When he called that, I wanted to see Zay go back. He basically had to face those fears to know the guy's back.

We'll continue to assess, but I was very pleased with Isaiah today.

Q. And then just getting to the roster situation, the mechanisms you speak of, kind of waivers --

ARTHUR SMITH: Everything's on the table, and it's going to be around the league. We've got a great football staff, and we'll go with every contingency plan and make sure we get the right guys through and keep -- and turn over every stone we can to make sure we've got the best roster available.

Q. What's your overall thoughts of just the progression of this team?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, I think this team, we've got a chip

on our shoulder. We've got something to prove. So I think we've been competitive from day one.

Like I was saying, the periphery opponents can say what they want. They can rank us 40th roster and 42nd coaching staff out of 32. We don't care. We're going to go compete and do our best.

We've got a lot of work ahead of us, but to get ready to roll for September 11th, when New Orleans comes here. Thank you.

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