

Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

Sunday, September 11, 2022
Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Arthur Smith

Postgame Press Conference



New Orleans Saints 27 - Atlanta Falcons 26

Q. Coach. What did you say to the team?

ARTHUR SMITH: I said hold your heads up high. Same peripheral opponents, probably wouldn't get a yard, get a point. Same one will be writing old narratives. That's not us. Didn't go the way we wanted, and Plan B, and we'll get better from this. We'll learn from this mistake. A lot of ways to look at it, easy narratives. It is what it is. We lost the game. Didn't make enough plays. We had a chance to put them away; we turned the ball over in the red zone. We had the penalties, probably a four-point swing. Really could have put them away and you gotta give the Saints credit. They made one more play than we did. And even when a game -- whatever, there's time, if they're breathing, this team is going to fight till the end, which we did. We had a chance. Tried to kick a 63-yarder, and they blocked it. That was the message. Again, it's about us. We got 16 games, and if we have the right mindset, we'll improve from this and become a better team.

Q. The decision on the play, third down, the Bible, and then the fourth down --

ARTHUR SMITH: The play never developed. Quarterback-center exchange, under center. So it happened. Obviously we'd love to have that back, but it is what it is.

Q. Then the decision to punt on fourth down?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah. Obviously, hindsight is 20/20. But when you're in that situation, I had faith. If you don't get it right there, they're even closer. So that's what you have, and we tried to play every second. Sure, there's a part of me that wanted to go for it. Again, hindsight is 20/20. But at the time my thought was, at the time, let the clock play down; let's pin them back. They had no timeouts. We made them use all their timeouts. And, again, if you had to do it over again, obviously knowing the end result, sure, make the other call.

Q. Arthur, what do you think changed defensively over the last three?

ARTHUR SMITH: We mixed up the calls. They made the plays, and we didn't get to the quarterback. And that's essentially what it was. When there was pressure, four-man rush, different coverages. And you gotta give them credit. They kept them playing at the end. We were collapsing the pocket most of the game. It wouldn't have mattered. We didn't get there. And same thing, I thought three-and-a-half quarters, we dominated the line of scrimmage. But they were able to make the plays at the end there.

Q. Your message to them that this is not the same old Falcons?

ARTHUR SMITH: Look, guys, it's a different team every year. Last year, right. Again, the game that happened, the collapse. What happened? They went back down and scored and won it. They had the opportunity again today. We didn't sit there and say, whoa is me. We practiced those situations. Try to get what we thought was the coverage -- thought maybe -- actually, I'm not going to say anything about that. But kept swinging, get the ball to C.P., get it down, work on mechanics, there's no panic on our sideline. They happened to get a personal foul. And we had a shot to go bang the timeout with two seconds. I thought we had a chance at least. They gave us an opportunity, and they made another play; we didn't. They blocked it.

Q. Did you have a feeling they were receptive to that message after the game?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yes. Guys, this is the same team, you guys wrote our obituary back in May, and you'll continue to write our obituary. Who cares? Because we got 16 games, and if we don't learn from this and get better. And we gotta go play LA. They got a three-day jump on us. So we'll watch tape; we'll look for corrections, and then we gotta get going on the Rams.

Q. Did you see any fatigue today on the defense or



was it just a matter of Saints making plays?

ARTHUR SMITH: No. To your point, Jeff. I didn't see fatigue. I mean I thought, again, I thought we handled the lines of scrimmage well. And, obviously, they made plays at the end, and we didn't.

Q. Coach, Cordarrelle Patterson had a series where he carried the ball eight times, 50 yards, including a touchdown, but we didn't see much of him.

ARTHUR SMITH: A lot of them are looks that they gave us. There was a lot of runs that Marcus had too. Pretty effective. Again, some of these guys aren't super human. I couldn't give them 50 carries. There's a lot of things that go when you run a run. How much rushing yards did we have? 201? I'll take that. And obviously you wish we had one more. Maybe in hindsight you wish you could have gotten a look at the spot on Marcus and they put the ball out. They didn't. We bobbled the snap, and that gave them the opportunity for them to go down there and kick the field goal.

Q. Mariota's ability to get up field, is that kind of try to show the diversity of the team?

ARTHUR SMITH: Absolutely. We're trying to use every asset and weapon we got. I've been telling them all year we're not going to play the same way we played last year. We're going to play to the strengths of our team. We got an edge we want to play with up front, and I thought for the most part we played with that edge up front.

Q. Offensively is that what you wanted things to look like for the most part?

ARTHUR SMITH: For the most part, other than the turnover in the red zone we had two fumbles, I believe, O.Z. and the one on the explosive. And then obviously Marcus got the first down, and trying to get himself up and guy did a good job, knocked the ball out. And the penalty down on the low one, that one bothers me.

Q. The diversification --

ARTHUR SMITH: Absolutely.

Q. You were kind of --

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah.

Q. You wanted it to today?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah.

Q. When you look at the explosive in the first half on the short yard situation, was that a misalignment on your part?

ARTHUR SMITH: It was. It was.

Q. What was the one question you want answered going into this game, and did you get it?

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, I mean, really, can we protect? Can we run the football on the defense that we're supposed to be the steel curtain in the '85 Bears front. That's what I wanted to see. The challenge we come up and manhandle that front, which is one of the better fronts. We'll get another shot at them down in New Orleans, and we can't wait. So write whatever you all want. You guys ranked us 45th. You buried us in May. Bury us again. We don't care. We'll get back to work.