

Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

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Arthur Smith

Postgame Press Conference



Atlanta Falcons 27 - Chicago Bears 24

ARTHUR SMITH: Just couple things here before we get started just getting the obvious out of the way. We won't have an update on TQ. I know he got carted off, but until we get the imaging, we won't know. Kyle, same thing. We won't have an update. Have to get the imaging, obviously get the opinions. That usually takes 24, 48 hours. So we'll see where those guys are at tomorrow through Tuesday and obviously up until Wednesday's practice. Other than that, I thought it was a really good job on our guys, good team win. Over came some adversity, some of it our own doing in the first half, and kept swinging. Really happy for CP. Pretty cool when a guy breaks an NFL record. We obviously needed that play. So it was a great team win.

Q. Coach, on the kickoff return, did you feel that kind of ignited both units there?

ARTHUR SMITH: It was a huge play. Obviously the way the game had gone they'd stolen a possession. Avery is a huge part of this team. Guys fight for actual yards, gotta be smart, know when the journey is over. He was trying to get extra yards. We gotta be smarter there. They were able to get the ball back. Obviously CP, we cut back, had a big run. They made an effort play, ball came out and they capitalized. That game could have gone another way but it says a lot about our guys, gave them the opportunity. We felt close week goal on some returns and big time play by the return unit and by CP.

Q. And the defense coming out and getting the stop, I think the third game that they got interception to close one out, that might not be correct, but -- after giving up the eight minute drive how big was that for the unit to come out and kind of put their foot down at the end?

ARTHUR SMITH: That's a give and take. And it's a real credit to our defensive staff and the defense to execute that plan. We knew what they were going to try to do and they hit a couple we were going to make them earn it the hard way. We didn't let Justin get loose on any big runs.

Guys tackled well for the most part. They have a good physical football team. It's the NFL, but we weren't going to sit there and hand them things and our guys really executed the plan well. Tackled well physical got to the quarterback. It was give and take. Got a couple sacks. He got out of a couple but the eight minute drive credit to them you gotta cover for a long time when you put a rush plan like that. It was a heavyweight fight, two teams that are physical and thankfully we were able to grind them out. Big game for coupe. A lot of guys, felt like it had been four weeks since we had played. So glad to come back and get a win at home.

Q. Sticking with the defensive story line for a minute, you talk about this team knowing kind of what the Bears wanted to do offensively and being able to use the game plan. When it really boils down to keep Justin Fields under 100 yards rushing on the game, how important was that do you think to the flow of it?

ARTHUR SMITH: Like I said, we weren't going to hand them anything. We weren't going to turn our back and hand them anything. We were going to make them earn it, and like I said, Dean and his staff, great job, and really, credit to the players. They're the ones out there executing. Hats off to those guys, and we were fortunate enough to get to coach a group of guys like this that just put their head down and work. They play well as a team. It's an unselfish team. Glad to get that win.

Q. Following up on Justin Fields, he took a lot of hard hits from your defense today. Did you see any sort of cumulative effect toward the end there, particularly their last possession?

ARTHUR SMITH: Run him that many times and he's a running back when he does that: Guys tackle, keep it in front of you, make sure, again, turn their back it wasn't on one person. It's team defense. I think any team you get like that a lot of carries add up. Just like I said, I'm proud of the defense the way they executed the plan and I think it certainly has an effect. Instead of giving one up for 70 if you make them go along the hard way, worked out in our favor.

Q. And on the other side of the ball, I'm sure it was a tough week for Marcus coming off the last two games. Could you talk about how he handled the week and today?

ARTHUR SMITH: Like a lot of things it's easy to say all the right things, do all the right things when everything is going your way, but you find out a lot about people in adversity. Been through a lot the last couple of years, certainly for all of us. We wanted to get that taste out of our mouth. The last ten days, like I said, felt like it's been a month. It says a lot about his character. You're going to find out a lot about people when their back is against the wall. Came out, I thought he executed the first drive really well, had a good rhythm, able to extend that play. They grabbed Kyle on it. And able to extend that play to Drake. Showed a lot of guts, put his foot in the ground a few times, got us a touchdown going in. Thought he executed the two-minute drive well. Handed it off. Wasn't perfect. Never is. But says a lot about his character and it's good to see that defensively, you guys didn't really blitz much today.

Q. What went through the strategy to kind of choose that as the way to go to defend Justin Fields?

ARTHUR SMITH: You saw it. I mean, honestly, there's give and take. There's a lot of good coaches. That's the fun part about this league. You try to take away Peoples strengths, easier said than done. But nobody panicked, did their job. We got a physical football team. That's what we think is our edge. So we thought whoever was the most physical team today would win. And so thankfully that was us.

Q. And I know you said you don't have updates on TQ or Pitts yet. Is there any concern that either one of them is a long-term situation?

ARTHUR SMITH: I'm not trying to evade the question. I've been through this enough where you think you see a guy get carted off and he's actually okay. You see a guy run off and he's done for a year. Until we get the imaging and kind of standard operating procedure now, guys are going to want to get opinions. And that's great. That's part of the NFL. So I won't have anything for you for 24, 48 hours.

Q. And just with Cordarrelle, when you're looking at kind of how you handled him. It seemed like he got a little bit more work there this week than last week.

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah. Coming off ten days. We had two games in five days. You don't play for a month or so, you got two games in five days. We didn't have that many offensive snaps anyway in Charlotte. So got your rest. It's a big stretch for us. It was a big win for us. Keeps us in it.

And like I said, we'll have a huge challenge going up to Washington. Thanksgiving week can be a distraction if we let it. And Washington has been playing really good football. So we gotta make sure we're ready to go.

Q. Coach, tie game eight minutes left. You were leaning on your ground game to kind of close it out. Just what they did there, especially on the fourth down play.

ARTHUR SMITH: Which one? The one that CP converted?

Q. Yeah.

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah. You learn from previous mistakes. Obviously defense had been on the field forever. Just the way the game went, right? You have a stolen possession is what I like to -- I mean you fumble in a return game. That's really the way somebody steals a possession or if at the end of the half, or start of the half. That's kind of the way that happens. So the defense had been out there a long time. So both their offense and defense looked pretty tired. And so you gotta make those calls. That's what I get paid to do. And wouldn't like our offense, they were going back and forth. And even CP, you know, he looked tired. But he dug deep and there was no stopping him when Marcus handed him that ball. And we needed that play. And we got aggressive, figured they were going to pressure. They did. Tried to end it. And then coupe made the catch.

Q. Coach, could you discuss the play, center Drew Dalman played before that. He got pushed into Patterson. Then he comes back and gets two blocks that kind of spring him?

ARTHUR SMITH: Sure. That's the give and take. We hit him on the sneak early. So they were in there. They were all in there in that sneak front. So we were trying to go around them. Obviously they got more penetration, and sometimes penetration doesn't matter, you're able to get the edge, but it stopped our feet. And that's the NFL. There's good players inside on both sides. They always have a say, too. People forget that. And but go in there and get the fourth down and it's a gotta have it, and thankfully we got that.

Q. You see TQ go down and then you have Abdullah Anderson, Jalen Dalton, Timmy Horne that kind of come in and what does that say about the depth that you feel like you have accrued on that defensive interior right now?

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, it says a lot about us as a football

staff. Our personnel, guys do a great job. They found players from everywhere. And if you got common vision and you don't have a political staff where it doesn't feel like Capitol Hill, you got a great group of people that can check their egos at the door, and part of our jobs as coaches to be on the same page and develop guys, because it's naturally going to happen in the NFL, you get to a game, and hopefully Kyle is all right, that's what coaching is, you gotta alter your plans, switch it on. MyCole Pruitt stepped up big time. There were little things nuances in the game plan that he did that nobody will ever know. But that's our job. That's our job as coaching a football staff and a team, and our guys believe that. So whoever is out there, we got faith in.

Q. Coach, only eight third downs for your offense today. Was there any intentionality in avoiding third down or was that more just a by-product of the way the game played out?

ARTHUR SMITH: It was kind of a by-product of the way the game played out. Like I said, they were on the field a lot in the first half and we knew they were going to run the ball. You know, so it's a fast game. I don't know how many total snaps they had. I don't have that on me. That's give and take, you get the two turnovers, right, the turn over that happened after the punt return and the other one happened after the first play of the drive. So that had a lot to do with it as well.

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