

Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

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Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Arthur Smith

Postgame Press Conference



Atlanta Falcons 20, Arizona Cardinals 19

Q. Coach, how did it feel to get the win today?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, D-Lite, it was a good feeling for us. We've been in some of these close games with a young football team in some critical spots. These opportunities to grow and to execute in those moments, it was cool to see.

Desmond, the third down pass to Pruitt, the situation there, big-time play by him. That was a tight window throw. Gotta have it. Then Tyler, the offense executing in that situation right there, knowing when to go down. Smart football player, and it allowed us to play that situation and walk off with the field goal win.

Q. To that end, talking about the youth, I believe I read somewhere that this team has the most players under 26 years old that's actively playing a lot of downs. Drake and Tyler moved into franchise records today. Despite next week kind of being it for this season, when you look at what this rookie class has done, what hope does that give you that this team is -- what this team is building in Atlanta?

ARTHUR SMITH: I mean, a lot of hope. I mean, it's not just the rookies. It is nice to see those guys that we invested fit our culture. Some second year guys and other guys, the guys that are in year 3 to 4, there's a lot of growth. Especially the line of scrimmage.

Look at a guy like Chris Lindstrom, the jump he's made from year 3 to year 4. Really proud of those guys up front too. Even a guy like Matt Hennessey gets in a position battle, handles it as well as anybody could have, him and Drew. Had an opportunity in the Charger game, gets hurt. Circumstances, you know, comes back, rehabs, and goes in there and plays left guard. Guys like that makes it really fun to coach this football team.

Q. Going back to what you were talking about, about

Desmond, it looked like, from the outside looking in, that he looked as comfortable as we've seen him over the course of these last three games. Is that something that you felt as the game was progressing?

ARTHUR SMITH: Absolutely. Tried to make sure we started faster, at least from the passing attack. I felt we did that. We had some long drives there. Tried to stay aggressive. I thought it would be the best thing for the team, and it was good situational stuff for Desmond.

Continued to pay off. I thought we executed in some critical situations. Things we've got to clean up. Obviously, the turnover down there, the blocked punt kind of bounced out, I guess.

We'll just keep to finding ways to try to improve and to win. It's going to come down to the close games. And the way the team works, I'll be sad that next week's the last week for us. But that's the way it goes.

Q. When it comes to Desmond, looked like you guys took a couple of deeper shots today. How much of that is maybe the next step of what you guys need to see from him versus some of the operational stuff that he's done so far?

ARTHUR SMITH: You know, again, Michael, they have a say in it too. You want to take a bunch of deep shots. If they're giving you certain looks, it's going to be hard to do that. That's the challenge. Knowing that, hey, if you're running the ball well and if you've got some misdirection stuff coming on, and the way they were trying to stop the run game and using pressure.

We get a chance, give us a look one on one, we've got to challenge those, and we've got to hit them. I thought it was a pretty good throw. I thought his pocket awareness was really good. He extended some plays, got us out of some things. That's what you want to see. If you want to be a real starting quarterback in this league, got to be able to do that.

So again, you know, the throw he made to CP, I know what the call was, but I thought it was a better throw than he



made a week ago in Baltimore, a similar type play. So those things are encouraging.

Really, the operation, the game comes down to this. You can make a lot of stats quarters 1 through 3. If you want to be a big-time quarterback, you need to win critical third downs in the two-minute and win the game like he did right there.

Q. Like you mentioned, some of his elusiveness, it seems like that's something he's had every week, maybe after the first couple drives in the first couple weeks. Is that something you saw in the draft process with him?

ARTHUR SMITH: You realize how good an athlete in terms of awareness. There's all kind of different, you know, guys that may be better running, you know. They get targeted that way. But when you have guys that are athletic, that have pocket presence and can extend plays, it certainly helps because you can use them in certain, you know, quarterback run situations or, you know, movement stuff.

But when they can extend plays in the pocket, it does change people's rush plans, which certainly helps the offensive line.

Q. Obviously, this is not something related to the game. Cameron Batson was arrested on Saturday. What's his status at the moment?

ARTHUR SMITH: We put out the statement, Mike. I'm going to let that stand and let the whole process play out. I don't have a new update. I'll stand with the statement we gave yesterday.

Q. So to be clear, he's still on the roster at this point?

ARTHUR SMITH: I'm going to go with the statement, Mike. I'll leave it at that.

Q. Switching over to the defense real quick, Isaiah Oliver getting kind of an extended role today than what we've seen in the last few weeks, what kind of went into that decision for you guys?

ARTHUR SMITH: The game plan. You know, who the quarterback was going to be kind of told you what kind of mode they were going to go in, and it proved right as they started the game. They play a lot of that spread out and 11-person. They've got a lot of wide-outs they like to roll. They have a pass-catching tight end in Trey McBride. A lot of it was game plan.

Q. Coach, 20 carries for Tyler tonight. I know you're a guy, you like to have the running backs, the guy with the hot hand. What was he doing well in this game that made you keep feeding him the ball?

ARTHUR SMITH: It's stuff he's been doing well all year. A lot of it, the challenge too is CP is such a versatile player. You use them together, there's a lot of plays we use CP as a wide-out. You saw the one in the red zone. There were some other plays we did.

It's nice when you can mix and match. Even Avery, the role Avery -- get two backs in there, Avery can carry the football too. It's fun to have versatile guys like that.

Tyler continues, he's consistently shown this, especially the second half of the year. As the game goes on, he's harder to tackle. Such a smart, instinctive player. Another guy that we're really excited about here.

Thank you.