

# Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

Sunday, January 8, 2023

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

## Arthur Smith

### Postgame Press Conference



Atlanta Falcons 30 - Tampa Bay Buccaneers 17

**Q. Coach, can you talk about the performance of the offense today and being able to sustain some long drives, the 91 drive was second longest this season.**

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah. I mean I think we were glad that they played some of their top guys to go out there and compete. We figured they'd bring a lot of pressure, which they did. So it was good back and forth. There were some things that we weren't really clean on that we fixed, and it's a credit to our players and our staff. But, yeah, the offense put some drives together. There are some other things certainly you can always look to improve, but it was good to see and it was good to finish the year with a win.

**Q. Along those lines, Coach, 7 and 10, some closure on the season. What are some of the highlights or some of the things you can move forward with the franchise here now?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, obviously I thought this group of guys, tomorrow will be sad knowing that this team has given us everything. The way they've come in day in, day out, and it started in the spring, the habits they brought every day, and you talk about foundation and culture and what it means to be a Falcon. We talk about our ethos, and these guys, and obviously we'd love to still be playing, but we're not, but there's a lot of good things that happened. We wanted to finish the season strong. It's important to win every time you go out there, and our guys did that the last two weeks, and there are a lot of bright spots to finish the season.

**Q. You kind of hinted on it earlier. How much can you maybe build off the last two weeks? Is there something to take into '23?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Sure. It's just the way that every day, no matter what, we're always coming in that building to do our job and to do our best. You can rationalize a lot of things in this league you look around the league, but that's

not who our guys are, our players and everybody in that building. It's important to them. It's important to come in here on a Sunday and to play well and to win. And you build those habits, Mike, you come in this building, it's important for us to play well at home, and it means a lot to us. Our fans mean a lot to us. You spend a Sunday to watch our guys and watch us work. We really wanted to end this with two wins, and I was glad we did.

**Q. As far as making the evaluation you can get out of Desmond from today, is that a little trickier evaluation because of the Buccaneers playing a lot of their second guys?**

ARTHUR SMITH: It's the National Football League, Mike. You know how hard it is to make a roster in the National Football League? You want to talk about their starters, put that one drive together. I thought he operated. We tried to come out, we didn't start the way we wanted. They had a say in that as well. And we tried to get aggressive to start the second drive, and we were able to string some plays together, get down there and thankfully able to get a touchdown. Only got three. Got aggressive off the turnover on the sudden change, took a shot at it and then made sure we at least came away with points. That was important. And had the one turnover on a little quick issue there on a protection thing, and I thought we overcame a lot. So there's a lot of things, Mike, red zone, third down, fourth down, and I think we've seen that the last four weeks. There's a lot to learn from, and pretty pleased. We got a long way to go before we make any decisions in the off season, but there's a lot you can learn from this, Mike.

**Q. In terms of Allgeier, at what point this year did you get a sense that maybe he could be a guy that could be a 1,000-yard back in this league as a rookie?**

ARTHUR SMITH: I think as the season went along. Some of it we were very confident. Obviously there's a reason we drafted him. I was pretty pleased with the way he was trending, and then some of it sometimes as opportunities happened. I don't know if anybody was running the ball better than CP was earlier in the year around the league, and unfortunately, he missed some time, and it was an opportunity where Allgeier, I thought, stepped in and did a



nice job. So did Caleb Huntley. And I think he really took off. Some of those were by circumstance, a little bit quicker, but we had a lot of confidence when we took him out of BYU.

**Q. The record was the same this year as a year ago, but do you walk away feeling a little different?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah. It's a much different year.

**Q. How so?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, last year you talk about the first year in transition. Talked about it earlier in the week, some of the obstacles as we tried to set the foundation, some things we were limited with. We had a little more of a veteran team. We had some guys that have been here a long time. We had some rookies that were playing for the first time, and then we had some guys that were first year that are no longer with us. That's out of necessity where we were to fill out a roster. Those guys gave us everything they had. It was a little bit different team, but we had a little more veteran presence when it got into close games. This year, add to the rookie class of a year ago, we had another group. Got some guys that I think at the end of their careers that are on some one-year deals that been pretty pleased with and we'll continue to evaluate that. And you can feel a little more foundation and identity, especially up front. The offensive line, I thought, week in and week out they rose to the occasion. They were knocking people off the ball. If they wanted to run it, we could. There's a physicality and a brand. And the next challenge is to make sure we become more explosive offensively. We need more pass rush. I get all that. But every game, other than the one at Cincinnati, the other 16 was a dogfight, and these guys embraced it. So they're indicative.

**Q. You had two rookies set offensive rookie records here between Drake and Tyler. I don't know, what does that speak for the future?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, it's a great foundation. Another thing, too, I've been around a lot of rookies that they start fast and they take a lull, and it's up and down, and talk about the rookie wall. Those guys got better as the season goes along. That's very encouraging. Talk about the one game the identity the tight ends and receivers, what we put on the quarterback's plate. That's a big part of Desmond's job, too. If you want to run the ball the way we do, there's a lot of things schematically I won't get into, but we put a lot on his plate. And he handled that really well. It's a coordinated effort. It does take all 11. And I thought the line, they were so excited about Tyler getting that 1,000 yards. I said earlier CP ran the ball pretty well, especially when he was healthy earlier in the year. That's hopefully

trending in the right direction, talk about a culture when you walk in that room day in and day out the example those guys set.

**Q. You just mentioned the offensive line. I was going to ask you about that. Because when you start listing the running backs that had impressive yards per carries, at some point you gotta think the line must be doing a good job of run blocking. Would you list that as another place where a foundation has been set?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Absolutely. It's also -- you watch Drake London block. Watch those guys. Watch KhaDarel Hodge. Watch those guys get in the mix, things we asked Parker Hesse to do that nobody will ever notice. Guy just does his job. See why he was a captain at Iowa, defensive end, by the way. Just a thankless professional that doesn't get enough credit. MyCole Pruitt, Kyle Pitts, those guys had a big part in it as well. The backs, everything is coordinated, the quarterbacks. So pretty pleased. Something you want to build off and evolve. But very pleased with the run unit.

**Q. Going back to the thought of evaluating Desmond Ridder knowing he had four games, when you kind of move forward now into looking back on those four games, is it one of those things where you really break down and put a lot of weight in the progress that's made or who he ended up being towards the end of that four-game stint, if that makes sense?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, that makes sense. But it's an offensive process. It's day to day. We've been in the building for a year, I think all our players. We adapted. Circumstances changed, and we needed to see what he could do. Played against some of the top defenses, two on the road, two at home. They threw everything they had at him. I'd argue as the games went on he got better. Very encouraged by watching him in pressure moments. I think, a little bit on fourth down, wanted to see him handle that, and I thought he did well. When you can do that and you can win third and fourth down, that says a lot about you, to be able to play, extend, look to throw, accident not get rattled. Again, not perfect, but we saw a lot of progress. There's a lot you could evaluate from.

**Q. This is kind of just going back to something that you said well before the season even started. Talking about being better at home and playing better at home, when you look at six games won at home, I know the record being what it was, but those six games, what did that mean for this team and where it's at?**

ARTHUR SMITH: You talk about building a foundation, you go back and want this place, our fans deserve that.

You're going to spend time and money to come watch us. When you asked me it's important to finish. It's important every time we go out there to do our job. They deserve that. That's our charge. That's the way we're wired, and so it's of great importance to us, and we'll continue hopefully to build off that, so people coming here, our fans, you can feel them. You could feel them today, and we appreciate that.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

