

# Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

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Atlanta, Georgia, USA

## Coach Arthur Smith

### Postgame Press Conference



Falcons 25, Packers 24

ARTHUR SMITH: There's one thing I want to say. It means a lot for us to win at home, and I thought our crowd has been unbelievable the last two games. It really made a difference. Our guys fed off that energy.

Like I said, it's a shared experience when you get into it like that, and you could feel them, especially that last drive.

#### **Q. Coach, what was the key to the offense getting moving and scoring on the last four possessions?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, I mean, we thought we were moving the ball pretty well all day. Good mix, guys -- a lot of things we were doing. That's why you keep working. We've got a lot of belief. But you've got to ultimately go out there and prove it. Sometimes -- I had a lot of confidence that we would come out and execute pretty well today. Again, a lot of things we're always going to have to work on.

But we've got so much belief in our guys. We get in those critical situations, going for it on those 4th downs, and our guys keep swinging.

Even the way they executed the little things, staying inbounds, not only once we got into field goal range, you're playing a fine line. Yeah, we wanted to get that last first, but to take all that time off the clock, make them use their time-outs, there's so much situational football, good situational football, and our guys executed late and before the half, too.

#### **Q. Can you explain the rationale on the decision to go for it on 4th down there to keep you --**

ARTHUR SMITH: The Bijan one? Before the two-minute warning I felt good about the play, the way they were blocking, and really whether it was going to be Bijan or Tyler in that situation, I had a lot of confidence they were going to get the first. That's a belief, and then just

situationally, could have been super conservative and kicked the field goal, but without a time-out, they would have possibly had a two-minute warning, depending on how the kickoff went, and then the time-outs. So wanted to be aggressive, and then even late, with a minute being 4th and 1 at that point, I didn't want to get too cute, and I knew our defense, if they had no time-outs, I had a lot of confidence we were going to stop them.

#### **Q. What do you say to Ridder after the first pick?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, he got hit. We got Kyle wide open. He got hit, the ball popped up. Kenny Clark, he had a good bull rush, I believe, and he never got to step through it. You go back and look at it, we had Kyle coming open, and it happens.

But the thing about Des, even the one that he got -- kind of got aggressive, was trying to work it to Drake, and he jumped inside, Jaire did, I believe, and thankfully he dropped it. We have so much conviction. It's not going to be perfect. You learn from it. Doesn't make the same mistake twice.

The first one, you've got to give Kenny Clark credit. That hit that caused that interception, those are stats that I don't think anybody appreciates, but if I was coaching Kenny, that's a hell of a play.

#### **Q. What's the next step for him in terms of his development from what you've seen so far over the first two weeks?**

ARTHUR SMITH: I'll go back and look at the tape today, but I thought it was a pretty efficient day other than the drive. We got the penalty to start the half. I thought a pretty efficient day. He's a winner. Guys believe him. You can see it. I think in those critical situations, he's at his best, and that's been his history, and I think again today, right before the half, they brought a pressure look, so he checks the coverage, he extends that play and works it back into Drake.

These guys love him. He embodies what we're about, and it was a good all-around game by the entire team.

Like I said, they're different guys, and there's going to be somebody different every week depending on who they're trying to take away and what the looks are, and I thought Jonnu had a pretty solid day and of course Drake, too.

**Q. Younghoe Koo made those two kicks; can you assess his performance today? I know he missed one early, but can you assess his performance?**

ARTHUR SMITH: It's like Des throwing the pick. We've got a lot of belief in our guys. We don't sit there and play in our fears, and that's what happens in the National Football League. Younghoe has made a lot of big kicks for us. Koo is about as clutch as there is in this league.

**Q. Arthur, obviously you get paid to make those decisions like the 4th-and-1, you could kick the field goal to take the lead. What is it about your belief or in your DNA as a coach that leads you to go for it in those situations?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, every one of those are different. You know what the numbers are, and you're certainly aware, but again, there's a human element to it, and the way that our guys were coming off the ball, again, the call -- again, they're all an educated guess. They have a chance to change it up, and they did at times.

That's what the league is. But there was a lot of conviction. Felt great about the call and really about the guys. That was why.

**Q. Following that up, not only you guys coming back offensively, but defensively you guys -- the defense had two or three stops in a row there after kind of getting steamrolled for three or four. What do you believe in terms of how maybe your belief is filtered into the --**

ARTHUR SMITH: The numbers? What's the total that they have? Make sure I have it right. Bassy's handwriting is a little chicken scratch sometimes. Green Bay's. They had the big play off the flea flicker, start the game with a DPI and then the one, first drive off the half --

**Q. They had like four straight scoring drives I think until the fourth quarter --**

ARTHUR SMITH: That's what I said, the chunk plays off the penalties. I'm just saying we've to stop them. I'm not making an excuse for them. Those are your words. I'm not going to give credit to even repeating them. Again, I don't have a problem with it, but I'd just say that we've got to not get those penalties. That would be a great coaching

point.

When the ball is up there like a punt, hopefully we can turn around and play that better. I'm not blaming the player that it was called on, but we can play those situations better, and credit to them, they got the penalty twice. Huge chunk plays, and then they executed well.

We made some adjustments, too, and they were trying to use the motion to get guys freed to get them off our press, and you come back as a team. That's the momentum of the game. They took the lead. Were they up 12, I believe? We went right back down and we felt confident.

That's what you do. That's what great coaching -- you come to the sidelines, say here's what they're trying to do. We changed up some called and showed them some things late in the game that we hadn't showed them early and tried to make them figure it out, and we went, what was it, four-and-out.

Again, that's a good NFL team. Those are good players, good staff. But certainly there's always stuff to coach on, coach off of and work, but I'm just proud of these guys.

**Q. That 4th-and-1 decision, did you make it right away or did you have to think about it for a while?**

ARTHUR SMITH: We talked about it, but I liked the call. When you're trying to -- I asked a thing now, you wanted a measurement, you don't get the measurement, and so I was going to -- now it was low because I was asking for a measurement. Again, I'll be quiet because I don't know what I get fined for, so I just threw the challenge flag as a time-out.

Then we talked about it some more. I was using the challenge flag as a time-out because we were debating the spot. Again, they made the right call and gave me time to talk it through with the players.

**Q. To go back to Des, you've talked a long time about his abilities in crucial situations, in crucial moments, even going back to college. What is it about him that you think makes him so good in those moments, and he seems to progress as the games go on?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, he's got good spatial awareness. You can see that. Some of the stuff when he scrambles as a play extender, certainly on some of the zone read stuff we did today.

Again, like I said, even as a young quarterback they always try to throw different looks at you. It's a good secondary, good defense, good coordinator. But he's able to process

really fast, and he's got a belief. He's got evidence of it.

You go back to his history in college, and so far in the NFL, I believe that's four straight wins with him as a starter, and he keeps working to get better. That's what we love about him.

So much of this game is not only just evaluating the physical tools, it's between the ears and the chest I would argue is a big part of it, too.

**Q. What can you legally share with us your thoughts about that Mack Hollins touchdown? What's a catch and what's a touchdown?**

ARTHUR SMITH: I'd rather not ever speak on it because we'll find out, and again, they have a tough job, but it is what it is. I'd have to look at the tape and we'll communicate, but they have a tough job. It is what it is, and it's our job to move on.

Thankfully we were able to come back and get the win.

**Q. Going back and talking about Bijan Robinson, he had more than 100 yards on the ground. Had a big hit, too, looked like he might have been sore or he was looked at afterwards. How is he doing, and what can you say about his performance?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Nobody said anything to me about any injuries, so that's a good thing. Again, it was a physical game. I thought he looked good, looked good on that last run.

Again, you're half a yard, give or take, away from milking the clock all the way down to one or two seconds to kick it to not go back out there, but I believe Quay Walker made a pretty good play. We had a little misdirection, get the 1st down, go down like we weren't going to score there, and so they made a play, and they did measure it, and then I took the time-out.

But we've got a lot of belief in him and Tyler and all these guys. When we get CP back hopefully soon, it'll add one more element to the offense.

**Q. Coach, following up on Bijan over here, what have you seen in terms of growth and development from training camp to now that he's at game speed?**

ARTHUR SMITH: He's just a very instinctive and very smart football player. We put a lot on his plate. A lot of times people draft pliers like that and it sounds good, but we had a lot of conviction, too, that he could handle that, a lot of things we did, and credit to our football staff. There's

a lot of meetings that go into it, and a lot of time spent, so we're just not sitting there and sound good in theory. We knew he could do it, and he continues to get better.

He's a really fun player to coach.

**Q. You mentioned Cordarrelle. He was inactive but he practiced all week.**

ARTHUR SMITH: Again, those are the decisions that you make. He could have gone if he had to, but we just -- those are the kind of decisions that we're paid to make, and a lot of it is communication with the player, so hopefully get him back really soon. He's trending in the right direction. Same with Jeff. You guys saw him at practice. Nothing to hide there. You guys are there every day.

But we've got a lot of belief. I thought Nate Landman stepped up. That's our team. That's why we continue to -- I told you guys in camp, why we develop guys, why we mix and match. Just proud of these guys.

**Q. Just to be clear, so it wasn't a healthy scratch for Patterson, he still --**

ARTHUR SMITH: It's semantics. Those are coaching decisions. As we all communicate with our players, a lot that goes into playing on Sunday, and you make some decisions short-term or are you looking at long-term, and also what the game plan is and how you think you need to -- what personnel packages you need do you think to win the game.

**Q. In terms of the first quarter goal line you guys had I think it was five plays from the 2 --**

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, they got the DPI, going for it, and then we had the false start, so it was 4th and 6 when we kicked it. Some looks -- again, I've got to look at the tape, but again, I thought -- and you adjust, you see something that allowed Des to score later in the game. That's what coaching is.

But again, try to be aggressive, some of the things that we had shown before. They've got good players, and we never would have known what 4th and 1 would have looked like.

**Q. Not to make this a scheme question, but more in terms of the rhythm aspect that the team has been talking about this week, was there more of an effort to try to get Des involved with his feet just to try to get him in more of a rhythm?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Again, it's just -- you're making those decisions how much you want -- that's going to be every week, how much you want to run, how they play. Of course they can always adjust.

It's a fine line. We've always got the ability to do it, but this was a particular week that we thought felt pretty good about some of the stuff we had up, and that was why. That's a good defense, and there's a lot that goes into it. Sometimes we adjust things in game, but we always have the ability to do it.

**Q. Just from my point of view and limited understanding, it looked a lot --**

ARTHUR SMITH: Don't sell yourself short.

**Q. I'm selling myself far on even that -- it looked a lot easier in the passing game as the game went on. Is that accurate? Did some things open up for you, or was that just you keep swinging and swinging?**

ARTHUR SMITH: You know, even going back to last week, like I said, we didn't have a lot of penalties today. That first drive of the second half, that felt like last week. Again, we could argue -- put yourself behind in the count, you get into some obvious pass situations there, you're trying to give yourself a chance to go get the 1st down, and they made a play. Again, I'd have to watch the tape on that, but that was the only drive I think we had that stalled out, but that was a penalty, and we didn't overcome it.

We did overcome one earlier that Drake went up and got it on 3rd and 15, but we were able to get into a rhythm. Last week it just was -- that's what it was. It just never felt like we got in a rhythm, and once you get in a rhythm of a drive, sure, the game is going to play out. They're going to adjust.

But that's why we have so much belief. We've got to go continue to improve. Just because we had a bunch of yards today, Detroit is going to have a game plan, we've got to continue to get better.

**Q. Could you discuss the play of Nate Landman who's been in the program for two years, undrafted guy who got his first NFL start today?**

ARTHUR SMITH: We don't -- again, that's why we continually, look, credit to the entire staff, personnel staff, football staff, and there's a lot that goes on behind the scenes. We believe in developing and those post-draft spots, any spot a guy gets on our 90 is important. Nate is a great football player. He's instinctive. He's heavy handed. Played a little bit last year for us.

But that's what we are. When you've got a real team and guys believe they all have a chance, things happen. Glad Nate stepped up today.

**Q. Coach, just wanted to go back to Jonnu Smith. How important is it to see what he was able to do to extend drives at some critical moments today?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, it gives you another weapon, right? There's so much focus sometimes on Kyle. That's what I say about play calling. Sometimes somebody else might be the primary, and you work through it with a look, something happens sometimes, a guy may bail out, especially some of play actions, sometimes guys may bail out and getting a vision. Again you don't know what the quarterback sees.

We think we do when you have the TV look and it slows down, but we've got a lot of weapons, and Jonnu is somebody that's made plays in big-time games and he's been good. That tight end room, those guys love each other. MyCole Pruitt is an underrated leader on our football team, and Kyle and Jonnu. If you're going to take him away, that play in particular, it was Bijan and Kyle were the primary, but they gave us a look, and then it comes back to Jonnu and Drake.

But that's football. So when you've got a lot of belief, okay, pick your poison, and Jonnu is one of those guys, he's a great catch-and-run player. We got a big yardage on the screen play and some of the stuff he got out in the flat, he's hard to tackle. Glad he's here.

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