

Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

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Desmond Ridder

Postgame Press Conference



Falcons 25, Packers 24

Q. Des, can you talk about how that game was? It was so crazy, you guys looked like you were kind of down for the count and then you come back and you just kind of take us through --

DESMOND RIDDER: No, no, never down for the count. When you see the Atlanta Falcons out there, we'll never be down for the count. We're going to fight until that clock hits zero. That's why I'm proud of this team and everyone on this team for not giving up, not -- just keep going out there and just fighting until that clock hits zero.

Obviously when you get in that situation, we were down 10, I think, or 11, whatever, 12, and you know, it's not about scurrying and panic. It's about, okay, take a deep breath and then just go play the next play.

Q. Coach Smith was talking about just one of the things that they liked about you even coming out of college was the crucial downs, the late-game situations. What is it -- how do you perform so well in those situations just from your perspective?

DESMOND RIDDER: Yeah, I mean, like we said last week, you talked about how the receivers handle not getting the ball, and I told you guys, the reason I play quarterback is because I have the ball in my hands every single play.

So for me, when those big-time situations come up, whatever it may be, we know that the ball does end up in my hands; I've got to go make a play.

I've been in those situations before, obviously college and here, and you know, it's something that like I said, it's not something that you panic over, it's hey, this is the next play, go execute it.

Q. Des, walk us through that crucial 4th down call right before the two-minute warning from your

perspective. You had the scramble on third, doesn't quite get it, then you've got the fourth. What's going through your head as you're working that play?

DESMOND RIDDER: Yeah, obviously trying to get the 1st down there. We had a run call called with a little RPO, so it could have gone either way. The end squeezed, I pulled it, he ran out of it. I just tried to go back, tried to make a play, get back to the first down yard marker, obviously came up a little bit short. Going back, I would obviously try to get six more inches.

Q. When Arthur was asked about it, he was using words like we had a conviction and a belief in the guys that we had to go out and make that play, whether it was Jan, whether it was you, Tyler, whatever, there was a conviction there. What does that say to the level of responsibility that this coaching staff puts on you guys in those situational moments?

DESMOND RIDDER: Yeah, it's obviously trust. Trust and seeing that throughout the week that we've put in the work, that we've executed that play over and over and over again, that we know when we come out here on Sundays that when he calls it, we're going to execute it so its fullest.

For me, that's just trust and belief in all 11 guys out there on the field that they're going to do their job and their job only.

Q. My expert analysis would be that the passing game looked very hard early on and then a lot easier in the fourth quarter. Can you tell me if that's accurate, and if so, what changed?

DESMOND RIDDER: You know, I'm going to say it was accurate. I would just say it's all about getting into a rhythm, getting into a flow. When we start being able to move the ball, getting those first 1st downs after the drives, getting them going, that's obviously when it starts to pick up, you start to see a little more tempo, a little more juice to the guys, and things open up.

Obviously we do a lot of play action, so the backers pull out really quick. The DBs might be more afraid to go for the



run and give up the pass above them or whatever it may be. So yeah.

Q. Is it difficult to be patient in the moments when that rhythm seems to take so long to get in gear?

DESMOND RIDDER: Yeah, you know, sometimes it is. Sometimes it is hard to be patient. You're just trying to look for a play, whether it's a run play, screen, whatever it may be. You're just trying to look for that one thing to get you going, that one thing to get that momentum going.

Sometimes, yeah, it is hard to be patient in those moments. You want to try to force a ball, you want to try to make a play.

But it's actually in those moments where you've got to kind of take a step back and just say, like I said before, hey, just play the play as it is, no matter what the down and distance, and just go execute it.

Q. What can you say about Bijan Robinson's performance, especially towards the end, he said he took a helmet to the chest that knocked the wind out of him but he still was able to come back and get yards for you guys.

DESMOND RIDDER: Yeah, he's a competitor. Like I said, he's a competitor, but he's also humble. He's going to go out there and obviously put his head down and go to work every single day, which he has, and then shows up on Sunday, and so for us, he's a huge attribute to our offense, and he does nothing but good things for us.

Q. After you threw your first interception, Bijan said he looked at you, he said he always looked to see the demeanor, and you were calm still, maybe even more motivated. Where does that come from, where it didn't bother you, where it didn't bring you down and you remained focused?

DESMOND RIDDER: That's just kind of how my whole career has been. Never get too high, never get too low. We always talk about in our quarterback meeting room, the energy feeds off us. If we're down, everyone is going to be down. If we're up, everyone is going to be up. For me, I tried to remain neutral throughout that entire game. I felt like I did my best job of just staying calm, and like I said, just playing each play as it comes.

Q. You mentioned rhythm. You talked about that throughout the week. You talked about it last Sunday. Why has that rhythm been so hard for y'all to figure out in the first half?

DESMOND RIDDER: You know, it's just how football goes. Just how it goes. Sometimes they're going to come in, sometimes they're going to punch you in the mouth. I'm not saying that's what happened, but I'm just saying, you can't ever dictate what the defense is going to do. Sometimes they come out and maybe have a better scheme, a better play call, whatever it may be, and we just have to go out and figure out how the next time we come back on the field, how to execute it better.

Q. Is it something in your game, though, because even if you go back to last year, it seemed like that was always kind of a thing, was early on it took a minute for you to get -- is that just how you are in some ways sometimes?

DESMOND RIDDER: That's for you to say, not me.

Q. Well, I'm asking you. You've known you longer than I've known you.

DESMOND RIDDER: No, you know, for me, obviously try to get in the flow of game. Obviously snap one you obviously want to be in the flow. Yeah, I would say sometimes it takes a little bit longer to get going. That's one thing, talking this off-season that we worked on was how can we be able to get out there and from play one be in that rhythm, be in that flow.

So that's one thing I obviously will continue to work on. Like I said, it's game 2 of a 17-game season, regular season, so we'll just keep continuing to work and keep getting better.

Q. When do you think you got the trust of these guys?

DESMOND RIDDER: When?

Q. Yeah.

DESMOND RIDDER: You know, shoot, I'd like to say hopefully I got that trust once I stepped in there last year. If I didn't have the trust of those guys last year, then obviously we're in the wrong position. I put myself in the wrong position if I didn't have their trust.

If you look back, that would have all been on me. If you went and asked these guys if they didn't have my trust, that probably would have started from the day I walked in; I did something wrong or wasn't doing what I was supposed to be or didn't go to my job 100 percent.

But like I said, ever since I've stepped foot on this organization, on this campus, I've wanted nothing but the best. I've wanted to put in 100 percent effort and have full

trust and respect of every single one of these guys on the team.

Q. By your volume and demeanor, you seem to be very excited right now, and I was just wondering what a fourth quarter like this does in the development of a young quarterback?

DESMOND RIDDER: Yeah, you know, it's huge and it's crucial. Like I said, even throughout that entire fourth quarter, I was just trying to stay calm, stay patient, and just let it come to me, just let the play play itself.

But you know, not only for myself but for the offense that was huge right there. That was huge for obviously us to go out -- it's tough right there getting those two stops right there where it's 3rd and 1, fourth and 1, and we aren't able to go for it. Obviously we played the situation. As a game, huge for Koo to come in step in after missing one early. To have the trust obviously that we have in him, for him to go out and knock down those kicks, that's huge for us.

Q. You probably didn't think you'd go through your whole career without throwing an interception, so I don't know how you processed that first one.

DESMOND RIDDER: No, obviously got hit on it, but it's just how you get back, how you bounce back from it. I felt like we did a great job of coming back out there, not worrying about what happened the last drive and just keep going on the next.

Q. Going back to that slow start, you're down 24-12, but your defense keeps getting three-and-outs, putting you in position to win this game. How important is it to know that you can have the confidence that your defense will kind of hang in there until you guys can get back in like you did today?

DESMOND RIDDER: Yeah, that's huge for us. Like I said last week, though, that's something that we can't count on every single week. That's something that we have to go out there and we have to set the tempo as an offense.

When we get back, we'll have talks of, hey, we've got to pick it up, we've got to do better, we have to lead this team, just so that -- in that one case, the one Sunday where our defense whether doesn't show up or they have a few plays go wrong here and there, we've got to be the ones to go out there and set the tone and set the tempo early.

Q. For you personally, when did you feel like the energy or the momentum switched for you guys? What changed for you? A lot of guys said kind of in the fourth quarter. Was there a specific play or drive

for you that you felt like --

DESMOND RIDDER: I mean, I would go back to we talk about as a team, we talk about that middle eight. We deferred off the coin toss, get the ball in the second half, we got the ball right there at the end of the first half, we knew we had to put points up on the board.

For us, when we were to go down there, move the ball, be able to get points on the board, obviously that was huge for us, and talking about that middle eight.

Q. Des, obviously the win is the most important thing, and I know there's some stuff you guys want to work on, red zone, things like that, but just kind of getting in the weeds here a little bit, over 200 yards passing, over 200 yards rushing, 36 minutes time of possession. I'd imagine as an offense you guys are pretty pleased with those numbers, aren't you, kind of as a template of what Arthur wants to do offensively each week?

DESMOND RIDDER: Yeah, like you said, there was a couple passes I wished I had back. I'm sure there's a couple runs we wish we could have back. It was not a perfect game. But obviously I felt like we did enough to go out there and get the win as we did. But obviously that's not the best Atlanta Falcons offense you've seen right there.

We know that we can do way better than that. So it's going to be up to us to come in here tomorrow, watch the film, get better, and go back to work for Detroit next week.

Q. Just to clarify something, middle eight means --

DESMOND RIDDER: Middle eight means last four minutes of the first half, first four minutes of the second half.

Q. Has that been something that's always been in your head your whole career, or is that something that you picked up here?

DESMOND RIDDER: No, I mean, that's obviously something that a lot of teams throughout football talk about is that middle eight. Especially, like we said, we want to double up that, so we get the ball right there at the end with the last four minutes in the first half, we want to take that ball, get points. When we say double up, we get the ball back at the start of the second half, come back and get points up on the board. That's huge for momentum. That's huge for offense, defense, and everyone.

Q. You had several key pickups with your legs today and you didn't really run that much against Carolina

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the week prior. Is there something about this rhythm that we've been talking about that can help you and even open up some things in the passing game?

DESMOND RIDDER: Yeah, 100 percent. That opens up things in the passing game and run game. Obviously going in the defense would have to then account for my legs, which I'm sure they do, the scramble, the call, RPOs, whatever it may be, the defense has to adjust for that.

But when we get out there and make scrambles, it obviously opens up the passing games, kind of gets people out of their spots.

As many times as I can use my leg without it hurting the team, I'm going to try to do.

Q. When you got rolling there late, the four straight field goal, touchdown, field goal, field goal, what were some of the keys maybe that was throughout that was working for you all offensively?

DESMOND RIDDER: Yeah, like we said, it was just get that first 1st down. Once we got out there on the field, it's just about getting the ball going, getting the ball moving.

When it's easy, you can hand off a ball and it goes for eight, nine, ten yards plus, that's huge for our momentum.

Just to get in that flow, just getting that first 1st down, getting it going, then you go back to Mike, you talk about how do you start fast, it's about getting that first 1st down, getting the team moving, getting the flow moving, and I think that's obviously what we did really well.

Q. Where are you at rhythm-wise? You talked about rhythm last week. Did you think you took some more steps in that direction today?

DESMOND RIDDER: I would definitely say it's strides in the right direction. It's not 100 percent where we want to be at, but it's definitely strides in the right direction.

Q. I know you have to watch film and all of that, but what is it about this particular game that makes you feel like not just you but the offense took a step forward today?

DESMOND RIDDER: Like I said, we was able to go out there and we was just able to keep it moving forward. There were things that went wrong. There were things that went right. But at the end of the day, we were able to come back, lock back in and keep it going.

You know, it's when those times and when those things do

go wrong, how are we going to bounce back from it, how are we going to come back out on the field and keep the ball moving forward, how are we going to keep the defense sitting on the bench and us on the field holding the possession.

For us, I feel like we did a good job of that. Obviously, like I said, there were a couple throws, a couple runs we could have back, but we're definitely moving in the right direction.

Q. Are you a guy who grabs a stat sheet at the end of the game to see what your numbers were --

DESMOND RIDDER: No, I was just told. He told me. That was about the first time I heard it.

Q. Do you ever look at them during the week? Does it matter to you to judge your progress by looking at those -- sort of the counting stats?

DESMOND RIDDER: No, I wouldn't say that because there's throwaways, there's batted balls. You can't just go look at, oh, I was however many of however many and say, oh, this is how I played that game; I played terrible this game because I had this. Can't look at the QBR because it is what it is. Last week I had a high QBR, this week whatever don't know what it was. But it's two different weeks.

So for me, it's just about going back, watching the film, and grading myself on what I could have done better.

It's probably not one play in there where I'd say it's A+. There's always things that not only myself but everyone else can get better at.

Q. Do you literally grade yourself? Do you go through every one of your games and grade yourself?

DESMOND RIDDER: Yeah.

Q. What did you grade yourself last week?

DESMOND RIDDER: Last week was like a C+. Yeah, it wasn't all great last week.

Q. How many As have you had in your life?

DESMOND RIDDER: Not very many. Not very many. That's just who I am. That's just who I am as a person.

I think that there's always room for improvement. There's always steps that you can take to get better, and for me, obviously being complacent is one of the worst things that you can do in this league as a football player is just feel like



you've made it or feel like you've worked hard enough to be where you're at.

For me, I feel like I've always got to work harder, always got to do one extra thing, always got to be better to be able to keep taking those steps.

Q. What would you grade yourself, or is it too early?

DESMOND RIDDER: This week?

Q. Yeah.

DESMOND RIDDER: Without looking at the film, probably another C.

Q. Why?

DESMOND RIDDER: Why? Because there were throws that I missed, reads that I could have done better, checks at the line of scrimmage. A couple times when I talked about a couple weeks ago getting in and out of the huddle, the efficiency there, going back, you look at the game clock, game clock is draining down on us, getting down, three, two, one, that's on me, getting in and out of the huddle, making sure we get all the calls right.

There are a lot of things that you guys don't see that you guys may think went right but actually went wrong. That's where I'll go back and look at it, and that's where I'll knock myself.

Q. What can you say about the fans and the crowd energy? It's the loudest I've heard it.

DESMOND RIDDER: The fans have been amazing these past two weeks. The whole city of Atlanta has showed up. They've done a heck of a job when the defense is out there on the field being loud. When the offense is out there we make a big play, you hear them. You hear everything that they do.

For us, it's huge to have that fan energy, to have the momentum, and we just hope they show up every single week just like that.

Q. What would you need to do to get an A for yourself?

DESMOND RIDDER: What would I need to do to get an A? You'd probably go back to that stat sheet, pretty close to perfection on that stat sheet, and then you go back and watch the film, you made every protection check right, you made every can or check that we have in the run game, whatever it may be, everything was 100 percent. You got

out of there healthy, you won the game, most importantly, and yeah.

Q. You said you've given yourself a few. Do you know the last one you gave yourself?

DESMOND RIDDER: The last --

Q. A you gave yourself?

DESMOND RIDDER: No, it's probably been a while. It's probably been a while.

Q. Are we talking high school while or Cincinnati while?

DESMOND RIDDER: Probably early Cincinnati while maybe. But even then, like I said, to have an A+, you've got to be one of those -- it's got to be everything goes right for you.

So that's tougher in this league. Obviously we can control what we can control and some things you can't control, so that's where you get automatically knocked in your so-called grading.

Q. I know last year was last year and it's a different team, but these are the type of games you guys had so many games last year where it was come down to the wire and you guys just couldn't finish, just fell short. What does it say about this team that this year first opportunity you guys have you do it and you close the comeback?

DESMOND RIDDER: Yeah, it's huge. Obviously as a part of last season -- well, I think it was whatever, 15 games we were in by one score, whatever it may have been, so to be able to come out here and obviously finish and finish on top, that's huge for all of us.

Q. How good did it feel to just come out with this home crowd and get that win, get that comeback completed?

DESMOND RIDDER: Oh, it felt great. Obviously to come back and win this, obviously with the home crowd behind our back, being in Mercedes-Benz, like I said, it's a different energy. It's a different atmosphere.

You guys talk about my home win streak, whatever it may be, that's not built from just me. That's not built from just the guys on this film, the coaches, that's built from the city. That's built from every single person that shows up in Mercedes-Benz waving an Atlanta flag. We'll just try to keep that going, keep the energy going, keep the



momentum going, and hopefully we're going to show up again.

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