

Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

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Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Arthur Smith

Postgame Press Conference



Atlanta Falcons 21 - Houston Texans 19

Q. Coach, could you discuss the play of Desmond?

ARTHUR SMITH: Pretty damn good.

Q. Could you elaborate, please?

ARTHUR SMITH: Sure. You told me to assess it, and now you want me to elaborate? Absolutely. The thing about Desmond, like a lot of quarterbacks, I think what you saw today was two pretty good young quarterbacks. Not what you want to give up a touchdown there. Defense played well all day, but that's what good teams do. You find a way. We had our timeouts. You practice those situations. He was about as cool as you can see. A lot of times I just look at players, and that look in his eye, and all our guys, and they executed the plan, took control of the situation, and then when he needed to deliver one, we got the look we wanted. And he did, and Drake came down with it, and essentially ended the game and Koo comes out and, you know, he managed the situation. And we got the most clutch kicker in the league and we go home with a win.

I think what it says a lot about him, it's a tough job to be a quarterback in this league. That's what they sign up for. A lot of those guys are well compensated. Takes a special mind. He's got the right mind. We know there's a lot of work to do. If we think we have all the answers today and we don't continue to improve and grow, you'll get humbled pretty quick. We're not going to take any victory laps. We're very pleased, and it was great to see his response this week.

Q. To you and your staff, what did you all do to battle through the penalties and the early fumbles?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah. That's not what you want. They happened, and we gotta clean those up. That hasn't been our history. The personal foul that probably that was the least of three-point swing on a guy that's uncharacteristic.

But it did happen. And so gotta get to the bottom of it. Same thing with fine line when you're working a situation, one they called on David at the end, I know they were already in field goal range. Those are just things we gotta eliminate. And we will. We'll continue to work. We got the right guys in the locker room.

Q. In terms of Ridder, was there a point today where maybe you felt like you saw him get more comfortable?

ARTHUR SMITH: It was all week, Michael. It's about preparation. Obviously he's gotta go do it. That's what I love about the NFL. You can rationalize it all you want and hype anything up, but it's a result. We're in a business, and they keep score every Sunday, and that's what you embrace.

I thought he did a great job all week preparing. Going back to last week, like I said, when you get in those things, it's what's your response. How do you handle adversity. You don't want the adversity, but that's going to tell you a lot about people, players and coaches, and that's why I'm thankful I get to coach a group of guys like that.

Q. In terms of Kyle Pitts, there were so many questions about where he was in terms of physically, at least from us. Is this the closest you think you've seen him to what you saw a season and a half ago at this point?

ARTHUR SMITH: I said this a million times. It's a long journey back. Everybody is different. And when it clicks, it clicks, you know. See how he feels this week. It's not -- people forget, you get calloused to the fact that some of these injuries these guys come back from, I mean, I know they look like super heroes sometimes, but they are human. And it was great to see it. He got into a rhythm, and he made some enormous plays for us. We moved the ball well.

The next step is we gotta continue to take advantage and obviously create more touchdowns. But we got the right guys, and Storm comes in there, doesn't flinch. Again, credit to our football staff. That's why you continue to look



and the right fit and a guy that's played, and he didn't blink and played pretty good football for us, helped us win.

At least Caleb up was on the bike. That's usually a good sign. We'll see. But that's what you do, and that's when you have a real football staff, and you're trying to constantly improve. Those are the things that nobody ever sees, but they help you win games.

Q. The way you won the game, the way you came back, you've always said the teammates and staff always believed in Des, but the way he won it today, I think that edges the future talk of your future quarterback.

ARTHUR SMITH: Look, you know, the job's never finished, Zack. And you gotta understand that. When you're a head coach, play-calling quarterback in this league, it's constant, and if you think all of a sudden, because of one game you can just relax, that's not the job. But you gotta understand that. But it takes a special mindset to do that. And he does. History says that. You have to have history and evidence. So today hopefully that does build confidence, because now he's got evidence. Great fourth quarter comeback, at the end of the game, the game got tight. I'll say this. They've got a real quarterback on their side. It wasn't probably the day that they wanted. We clumped something on the third down and we saw it and made a play. Not many guys can do that. But he did. But then the ball comes back to us, and we got three timeouts. You know, one-score game, we had a lot of confidence. But that's what you want to see. It's healthy for the game. You need great quarterback play in this league. It's exciting. It's what people come to watch.

Q. Coach, five weeks in, how would you describe what you have in this defense, because this unit repeatedly is keeping you in every single game.

ARTHUR SMITH: It's the whole team. It's a mindset, but, again, we got the right guys over there. Like I said, that's what good teams do. They handle a couple sudden changes, with the turnovers. Some of the things, the field position. But they don't flinch. And, again, it's somebody -- you win as a team. I can't say that enough. And if you have the right mindset, it's not three independent units. It's a team. You gotta understand how you win as a team. And so we got some really smart veterans over there. They understand the plan. We tweak it every week. You can't do that if you don't have really smart players. And they do. And like I said, just proud that I get to coach these guys.

Q. You touched on this a little bit, but after the last two games, obviously there was a lot of focus on Des.

What were your conversations with him like during the week and how did he respond?

ARTHUR SMITH: You know, perspective. Remind him he's not the first quarterback that's ever had a bad stretch. But, again, you gotta go prove it. You can't make excuses. Same thing as a coach. I think when you get to that part and you get defensive and you start making excuses, you're not going to be objective. You're not going to improve. That was a lot of it was understanding, hey, how do we take that next step. We still feel like we gotta come back and we gotta get better. And you don't want to be the same team in October, you know, going into December and January and keep playing. We gotta continue to improve, but today was a good step in the right direction.

Q. Was there a point during the week where you felt he was in a good place?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah. Probably by Wednesday, because that's the thing. No matter what, you try to ignore, not get on the roller coaster, but sometimes, unless you, I don't know, go to the other side of the Earth, Western Australia and turn your phone off, I don't know, because everybody is around you, but it takes perspective and the right mindset.

Q. What did you learn about Bijan Robinson in those moments after the fumble and how he responds in those situations?

ARTHUR SMITH: Same thing. The play he made on that pass was ridiculous. That's who Bijan is. I'll say this. Great players make the hard things look easy. He continues to do that. Again, another fun player. Glad I get to coach him.

Q. Coach, you guys held Texas to 4 for 13 on third downs. Just how big is that holding them to three instead of seven, especially?

ARTHUR SMITH: Oh, enormous.

Q. To keep your offensive momentum going?

ARTHUR SMITH: Enormous. Those are the games within the games, right, when teams have a chance to steal momentum and you're able to -- I call them four-point swings. I thought the defense, again, like I said, we knew this offense. They had been getting a lot of chunk plays. They had a few, nothing crazy explosive, but enough where they got down there a few times, and thought they did a good job, again, playing situational football. It's the National Football League. Somebody is going to make a play, but you don't let that all of a sudden deflate you and

then you give up touchdowns. Yeah, those are huge, huge momentum plays.

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