

Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

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Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Arthur Smith

Postgame Press Conference



Atlanta Falcons 24 - New Orleans Saints 15

ARTHUR SMITH: It was a challenge take the game over. It was a challenge all week. Win the line of scrimmage and win the game. That's what the O line did.

Q. And the play of the running backs during that sequence, nine straight runs there.

ARTHUR SMITH: That's what I said. We could have picked it up. I thought about it at times, but when you're watching the intent and the way those guys were going up front, the way they were blocking and the way that our guys were running the football, and that was all three of the runners, you know, why pick it up? And so that was encouraging. That's who we need to be to close out games; and it's just one game, but we needed that win in the worst way, and I thought overall it was a good team win.

Q. And, yes, along those lines, how gratifying was it to stop the three-game losing streak and move into first place in the NFC South?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah. Look, those things gotta play out. I mean, we got six games to go, right? And it'll feel like six lifetimes. I mean, it's just the National Football League, and it ebbs and flows. I mean, you're caught by a couple of plays in the last two games, and we knew coming off the bye week and everything we talked about, some of the things logistically we wanted to do as a staff, we certainly did that. The ways we wanted to play, getting some guys in space I thought helped us, and then rolling through personnel defensively, keeping guys fresh. I think you saw a little bit of that. So we got plenty of stuff to work on, as always, but overall a good team win.

Q. What went into the decision to play C.P. more? That's really the first time, other than an injury situation we've seen it.

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, he's been building on it. You saw

a little bit in Tampa about where you saw him. I mean he could play all over the place. And it gives you another guy. We didn't have to go out there, but if we need to win one-on-one outside, he gives you that. You talk about being fresh. Those are hard guys to tackle. When you're getting momentum and you're getting into the drives, and we believe in our conditioning. So he'll continue, depending on the plan. And but all these guys as we hopefully continue to get better, and they'll all be involved.

Q. How do you feel Des did today?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, look, overall, I mean, a lot of those drives early, he got in space. We talked about it, using his legs as a weapon, which I thought he did pretty well. They adjusted on some of the zone read stuff, which got us on that first drive in the third quarter. You know, a little bit -- we were going fast, in and out, trying to end the half with a touchdown, not giving the ball back, and we liked the angle of it. He had to move. I believe Khalen Saunders kind of got in the way, and a little miscommunication over there. And Matthew got up under it. And the other one, he was trying to make a play, being a little greedy. But when you like about him is the way he came back. You know, they hit pressure. The easy play would be underneath, but he believe in it, he drifted. Big-time throw to Bijan, got him one-on-one in space, which we wanted. So he doesn't flinch. So, yeah, obviously you don't want the turnovers. Thankfully, today we were zero, and we were able to get Jessie's interception and then Jessie punching the ball out. So thankful for that. But he's resilient, and we'll keep working.

Q. I think he was 4:04 on the 95-yard drive, but he had scuffled a little bit. Did you have any hesitation in putting the ball in his hands in those situations?

ARTHUR SMITH: No. You gotta believe in him, Josh, when you put him out there, and that's what he's done. His history will show you that. Just throughout all the games he played in college, like he's pretty damn good in critical situations in the fourth quarter. He's done that in the NFL. Like I said, we gotta keep working. We got a lot of belief, and more importantly, those guys have belief.



Q. You weren't happy about that timeout you had to call before the Bijan pass.

ARTHUR SMITH: Talk about logistics. But, yes, somebody came out. It gets under 15. So you have a mechanism to get up on the ball so you don't have to burn it. And then it was too slow. And so I wasn't going to -- and then I guess I must be living right because the next play we got the touchdown, thankfully.

Q. I wondered if you had thought you'd lost that play and that's why you were miffed about having to call the timeout.

ARTHUR SMITH: No. It was somebody solved -- yeah, that was the one error that we had. Hate wasting timeout. Wasn't going to take a delay of game there and so we had to use it, but we'll get that fixed.

Q. And on Jessie, those two plays feel like kind of a knack thing?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah. There were some things that Jessie, like a lot of our guys, they're prideful players. He puts a lot of work in. It's something he felt he got a jump on it. And then it's the effort. Not only that, he got down the sideline and then Zach Harrison -- Zach making those blocks. I mean it takes everybody, but great playing. And then Jessie's play punching the ball out on Hill, that was kind of a turning point in the game.

Q. Unless my eyes were deceiving me, I thought I saw Dave Ragone in the box today. If that's the case, A, the thought process and how did it help you?

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, first for me, Dave and I collaborate on everything. And both of us didn't need to be down, and I think there were some things with Dave's experience that he could help Des as he was seeing unfold up top and as they communicated. So instead of both of us being down, it was just a logistical thing where I thought -- and I thought it worked well today. Dave's got a good presence and good feel, and the communication in between the staff and me and the quarterbacks, I thought helped. Again, you see some things down here, but we just thought it would be a changeup, and obviously happy with the results today.

Q. I couldn't help but notice after the missed field goal, obviously there was a lot of celebration on the sideline, almost to the point of a sense of relief really. Can you just talk about what the last couple of weeks have been like for, not just you, but the players and the atmosphere around the team?

ARTHUR SMITH: I think, Jeff, I mean you've covered

sports a long time. Guys -- I keep saying, it's not just coach talk. This is a different group, and I mean that in a great way. I mean they just -- these guys work so damn hard, and I know everybody works hard. It's pro sports, but if you had seen our Wednesday practice, it felt like training camp. It was a damn battle. And these guys wanted to win -- and I would argue that it paid off. I mean, it felt like a heavyweight fight. It was physical as hell out there. I think it was kind of cathartic for a lot of those guys because they know they put a lot of work in. Guys were frustrated, felt like there was a play or two here. That's what the games have come down to. We lost those two at the end, and we had an opportunity, thankfully, to go take it out on somebody else. So it was probably more cathartic, I would say. But it's the whole team. It's a close team.

Q. You mentioned defensive, that you guys were kind of rotating guys a little bit more. Was Hellams and Richie part of that, too --

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah.

Q. -- or is that something maybe where DeMarcco was kind of pushing --

ARTHUR SMITH: Both. I think, too, again, people want to get you in somewhat sub defense. They weren't playing a lot of heavy personnel on some of their tight end packages felt little. So that's a lot of the NFL right now. So people do that. Then they try to get the smaller guys into the run fits. So you're just trying to change it up, putting guys in spots where you think you can maximize them. And that's a credit to DeMarcco as well. Even you saw Tre go out there a little bit too.

Q. In terms of like you mentioned with Dave being up in the box, is there an example from today that really stands out --

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, because you do so much self scouting. So everybody's got tendencies. You're going to always try to break yours; they're trying to break theirs. But it's not just what they're playing, how they're playing, what the matchup looks like up top. I've got my view. I've got the surface. Like I said, sometimes it's like a NASCAR pit crew. And I just think there were some things I wanted to see, and it was more about some of the matchups really and just how they're playing, where their safeties are, if they're leaning to a certain guy or not. Pre snap, what they're trying to roll on the quarterback that you may not be able to see from ground level.

Q. Coach, you talked about Jessie Bates's two turnovers, but can you just talk about the red zone play overall of your defense?

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ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah. I mean we got down there twice. Obviously disappointed to turn the ball over, but the other one, he ran in. And then defensively we gave up some yards, but it comes down to situational football, and two enormous plays down there and holding on the field goals. So we'll get some of that other stuff cleaned up. They had some new wrinkles. They hit a lot of shots kind of between the 20s. But when it came to those critical downs, that was the difference.

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