

Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

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Coach Arthur Smith Postgame Press Conference



Falcons 29, Colts 10

Q. Talk about what Taylor provided for you today and no turnovers.

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, he kept the offense in rhythm. We wanted to be aggressive, and he certainly executed the plan. It helps, he's got a lot of experience, and you could feel it, and we got into a lot of drives and a lot of guys contributed, and I thought he did a phenomenal job today.

Q. Could you speak to your defense and the six sacks that they had --

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, it helps when you've got really smart players because the opening drive they converted the first 3rd and long and they got into a little no hurdle and there was a DPI, then they got the ball in there, and a couple things tweaked in-game, I thought those guys, Ryan and Jerry and Jack and the players started throwing different looks, made him hold it an extra tick, give or take, and the guys played really well up front.

Same thing with situational football as a team. That's been a thing that's kind of stopped us a little bit, not handling in the half. When you defer the middle eight, everyone will look at it, and we're going to do that. We're going to look at points right before. There was a minor clock issue but we were going to run in time-out so we had a kickoff which we didn't want, but we got what we needed, and then came back and got the touchdown. That's what you want. When you talk about doubling up, doubling possessions, that's a 10-point swing, and that's how you can win games, if you can control those situations.

Everybody was in tune in all three phases. It was a good team win.

Q. How big was this win for you in the bigger playoff and division title picture?

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, you know how the season goes.

Just the focus was we needed to get that win. You want to be relevant late in the year. Obviously it's good to win this time of year and be in it, and we've got to get ready -- obviously tomorrow is Christmas and other things around the holiday season, but we've got to get back to work and get ready for Chicago.

Q. It seemed like you guys were maybe a little more intent on throwing the ball early today --

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, we've tried that, too. It's what they're getting -- sometimes it's that first 3rd down. It's been our intent a couple games. It may not have gone that way, but certainly when we were able to convert, stayed into the drive, stayed aggressive, and kind of mixed and matched throughout the game, I thought the guys did a great job, coaches and players.

Q. You've talked a lot about your offense throughout really the course of the year, and it seemed like maybe this was the most in flow --

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, absolutely. Obviously you want to get touchdowns late, but you also want to play the situations. So the last two red zone drives, you could say you got a little conservative, but you're making them use time-outs. You wanted to be aggressive, but I didn't want to -- that's the stuff that as a coach you wish you had had touchdowns there, but you're playing the long game there, and you don't pop a run.

Still able to get points, but that's something that we can continue to work on, but you're right, when we needed a play, guys make them, and it was different guys. The Jonnu play on the screen, 3rd and long, that keeps drives. That gets points on the board. There's so many little plays right there. They started bringing a lot of pressure, and we make an adjustment to say, hey, when this happens we've got to get outside.

It's the underrated things like Mack Hollins and KhaDarel Hodge gets the play started. Unfortunately Jake went out. He couldn't come back in the game. We'll have more on Jake Matthews later, but he couldn't come back in.

But those are the plays that help you win, so it was a team effort. It'll always be a team game. Proud I get to coach those guys.

Q. The last time you showed up without a mustache, you said it was like a 3:00 a.m. impulse --

ARTHUR SMITH: It was impulsive. I had to change momentum, clean up -- church myself up for the holidays. Should have had a leather jacket like this guy.

Q. Is there any way to compare joy versus relief right now from your standpoint?

ARTHUR SMITH: That's a great question. When you're in the NFL, you've probably heard me say this, a lot of coaches, sometimes winning is a relief. But what's been good is when you're in these -- you see the response from the team. That's why you love this game, and it's kind of refreshing. Sometimes you go back and you kind of think of things, and obviously you don't want to lose that joy, so I would say it's more joy, but certainly sometimes it can feel like relief, and you don't want to lose that perspective.

I think that's been a great thing is that perspective, and there's certainly a lot of joy in that locker room, and for myself personally, for those players. It's not about me. It's about the players and the staff and the organization and the fans out here today. They were phenomenal.

Q. You have a lot of family here today at the game. What does that mean to you?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, they show up, and they're huge Falcons supporters, as are a lot of people in the crowd. At least they didn't go the other way. At least they still showed up. It would be a bad thing if your family stops texting or calling you or doesn't show up.

Q. You said you could feel Taylor's experience out there today. Is that on the field, during the plays or --

ARTHUR SMITH: Just everything. There's a lot of reps, as we've talked about before. It's a tough position to play.

Even the little things like the subjectivity of -- when you're in that situation before the half, all you're doing there is you're just trying to get time off there, and you can take a shot, but nobody is going to give you that. You can throw a Hail Mary but that's probably not -- or you can get maybe 10 more yards, give or take. Nobody is going to heat you up right there.

So just going into the half with the field goal, but him being aware, never realized the clock was set, but when a vet

looks up, he knew it, that that's what you want, and you just play the long game.

One thing that was different, we had to kick off and then they went for the kneel. But just the presence of mind, just being in all those situations, understanding, hey, check-downs are good here, seeing what they're playing, coming back. You don't need to be greedy here. Those are a veteran thing. That's not a shot at any young player, but that's what helps.

Q. I think you only had two three-and-outs today. You talk about building momentum from drive to drive, how critical was that early on getting Taylor in a rhythm?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, it's any team I've been a part of, that's the key to offense. A lot of times it's that first 3rd down. It's funny how energy and momentum work. It's like cliché as that sounds, but it's true. You get in those drives, and it's the difference sometimes. You get stalled out on one and then maybe they score and it just may take forever to get the ball back, but it just keeps the energy up, and those guys did a good job today.

Q. I know you said you felt a lot of joy, maybe a little bit of a relief, but how much of this can help confidence just of the team moving forward in these final games trying to make this playoff push?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, you know, I think you see the way these guys play every week. I've had a ton of confidence all year. I had a ton of confidence going into this game, and just the way we worked all week because you can feel it. Sometimes you feel -- the teams I've been on, sometimes you can start to feel people look to the other side or -- but this team, you see the energy we had all week, and it's given me a lot of confidence all year.

Q. (Indiscernible) about Jessie Bates and his new career high, sixth interception for him --

ARTHUR SMITH: Very happy for him. You want to make sure -- you add guys, and guys that may not have been here to get that contract, but you've got to have the right guys. There's always risk in every move you make. We're very confident. We had a lot of carryover, Steve Jackson out of Cincinnati, a lot of people, Steve is one of the best most honest people I've ever worked with, kind of pumped people up, and then the scouting that goes into it, and it really is about fit, chemistry, about what you want to do schematically. If you don't have a plan for that, then you're not going to give them the best chance to be successful.

Jessie has come in here and he's a terrific football player clearly and a great teammate and just very fortunate we



were able to get him.

Q. It's week 16 and today is the first day that your defense has allowed a rushing touchdown to an opposing running back. What does that stat say about that unit?

ARTHUR SMITH: They've been stout against the run. Sometimes in certain coverages some teams get to check with me so they pick the ball up more if you're showing lighter -- it's kind of become a common thing in the NFL, so that's the game you're playing, so sometimes you see teams that -- depending on what we're playing, they try to check the pass.

So it's a combination of a lot of things. They bowed up and we haven't given a lot of explosive runs all year, been really good in the red zone, and then today, situation, like I said. The offense, defense, special teams all playing momentum off each other.

Q. Can you walk us through the decision to use that time-out after the spiking of the ball with 10 seconds left there at the end of the first half?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, because we were just going to run it or we were going to run like a sprint-out just to milk the clock. That's what I'm saying, there's a miscommunication about the play being set, and that's why there was no -- why they were still in the huddle, and that's where Taylor had the advantage, that I'm asking to pump it, never set it, and -- I'm not criticizing, so I promise you I'm not trying to get fined so this isn't a criticism, I'm just letting you know what happened.

So the risk-reward there as to why even have a -- certainly wanted to take the five-yard penalty. That's what happened. But we were just going to run it or we had talked about doing the sprint-out, call it a long foul ball, just so we could get the field goal and not have to kick off. That was all that was going on.

I've got to do a better job of not showing my frustration.

Q. What's Christmas look like for the family?

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, it'll be better now, I guess. The kids are fired up. It'll be a joyful morning to spend with the kids.

Q. You spoke about wanting to be relevant late in the season. You guys had already seen what happened with New Orleans on Thursday, and depending on what happens with Tampa Bay, Jacksonville, could be another three-way tie. What's it been like going

through the NFC South this season?

ARTHUR SMITH: It's every year. You know what it looks like sometimes at Thanksgiving, can certainly change the middle of December. That's what makes this league so fun to be a fan of. It's the most competitive professional league in the world in my opinion. So week to week, everything changes.

At the end of the day, when you get caught up in -- you obviously want to control your own destiny, and if you can't, obviously you need help, but nothing matters if you don't take care of your own games, so it was a step in the right direction getting this win today.

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