

# Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

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Atlanta, Georgia, USA

## Raheem Morris

### Postgame Press Conference



Jaguars 31, Falcons 0

RAHEEM MORRIS: Preseason in the books. Hard decisions for all of us. Obviously this is the hardest part for coaches. Really the hardest part that you do when you go through this process of eliminating people off your team and doing those things.

Toughest thing for a coach and a front office. So got to get those things done in the next couple of days. With that, I'll open it up to questions.

#### **Q. Yeah, Coach, how do you feel the second team played?**

RAHEEM MORRIS: I thought they played physical and tough. I think they came out and played against that first group for the Jaguars and did some nice things early. Standing up, really playing the right way. You never want to call the second team, the guys we put out there today.

The guys that went out there today played tough and physical for us, trying to define some of the roles, trying to form the bottom of our roster.

We've got some tough decision, like I said. When you go back and look at it individually, you'll always find things you want to see, and you will always find things that you don't. We'll do those things every time we go out and play.

#### **Q. Could you discuss the camp that Mutin has had? He had 14 tackles today and showing up in everything he has played at?**

RAHEEM MORRIS: I don't think he has defined in just today. I think it's been defined throughout the whole process since I've been back. Watching him in OTA and learning what we do and how we do it, watching him put his pads on and become a really physical player in practice, and then watching him go to some of the games and lead our team the right way.

I think those are the most important things that you want to do when you talk about players. He plays with great energy and plays with great passion. He loves the game.

You can feel his grit and his effort all the time, whether it's in the locker room, whether you are walking by him in the lunchroom, or whatever the case may be. He is a passionate young man that you cheer for all the team. Those are the kind of guys you want to work with.

#### **Q. How do you feel about the last practice for training camp, and how do you plan on carrying that momentum into the regular season?**

RAHEEM MORRIS: Are you talking about the scrimmage we had?

#### **Q. Yes.**

RAHEEM MORRIS: I was extremely ecstatic about the scrimmage. It was a physical, competitive, highly fun environment that you guys got a chance to go out there and watch. I know you guys really appreciated that day.

We got a chance to get our owner out, and I kicked him off the field once or twice, but he couldn't stay off the field. He was just out there. They did a nice job of going out there and making it a game-like situation for those guys who did not have the helmets on.

I forget I didn't talk to you after that practice, but the excitement about that and getting that many snaps, I believe it's 107 snaps on the day, the transition from special teams to offense, to get it going at halftime to be able to come out and get those guys to come back and rally and get a good first half from the offense and a great second half from defense, highly competitive.

You guys enjoyed it. I know you kept asking who won the game, what was the score, and nobody had an answer for it. I was thinking about what I was going to say when he asked me that because I had no idea. I felt like the Falcons won the day.

#### **Q. That was also the first time that we saw Kevin King**



**I think operating at safety. We saw that again tonight. Can you explain a little bit about the thought process there?**

RAHEEM MORRIS: Just the versatility of the young man. We can play a little bit at corner and seen him make plays in the first game against Miami. We've seen him make play throughout camp.

He has a little versatility to go play some dime position for us, which you have seen in camp and our practice and some of the package that we have.

Today he put in the safety a little bit with the scrimmage that we have to see him go back there and be able to move around. When you create that kind of versatility, you create a lot of help for us in all the different roles.

To give the guy the best chance to be on football team in any fashion, I just think that's a great job by our defensive coaches to get him ready to play all those different spots, particularly by Kevin King coming off all the injuries he's had and the tough times he's had in the National Football League and watching him play with complete passion and fun.

**Q. Now that they changed the rule, I think it's been a couple of years now as far as making the cuts at the end at one time, is it harder or do the pros outweigh the cons from what it used to be?**

RAHEEM MORRIS: I believe it's happened the last three, four years since they've done that. Since COVID, I believe.

I actually like it that way better because you give every young man a chance to go out there and prove himself to give him that fair shot, that opportunity. There is nothing worse than cutting a guy that you had planned on playing in the fourth and you can't because you have to get down to a certain number on the roster.

So giving a guy a chance to go out there and get some reps, some game-like reps, for other teams, to talk about being on a different team. I talked to them about putting on the shield on the National Football League and how important that is. I learned that a long time ago.

To give them an opportunity to see other people, to give them an opportunity to advance in their careers or to go home. I talked about it with our owner today. To go home and get ready for when your number is called and your name is called at some point in the season. Those are things that we value.

It's no different than what our culture. It's no different than

what our ethos is when you put people first. The more time you get people to be around us, the better.

**Q. This is also the first time that we get a chance to you can that to you a little bit about A.J. Terrell's extension. Just your overall thoughts? You saw him come in as a rookie, and how is he the same and different from what he was then?**

RAHEEM MORRIS: First, I have to say this: I don't think anybody knew he was up, and that was like the most beautiful thing about the whole process.

We're behind the scenes. We're talking about a contract. You got his agent working with Terry. We got our money people working with Terry, talking to his agents. All this stuff is going on, and all A.J. did was show up to work and play the corner position, lead defensive backs, give us great energy at practice, tackle, knock down passes, get better, go to work and just play.

The excitement for me being here when we drafted him and that process -- that was my draft pick. It wasn't Terry's. We have to make sure we say that. Terry did not draft A.J. When we drafted him back then, you knew what kind of man he was. You knew what kind of resolve he had.

I remember giving him a bunch of stuff about getting beat in the national championship game. Who knew it was going to be Justin Jefferson and Chase? You knew he had a fight to him, a certain toughness. He has done nothing but show us that since he's been here.

When a young man is rewarded for doing those things and we can't thank the Arthur Blank and the Blank family enough for what they do to reward the guys that really deserve it. In our community that's been a part of what we do. It is absolutely outstanding.

I can talk about A.J. all night if you asked me. I'm proud to have him. His family came. It's a beautiful occasion. Got a chance to walk around with those guys. Remember it was COVID, so really didn't get a chance to meet them back then.

I was fired up for him to do that. When a young man tells you that's one of the best days of his life, that's absolutely outstanding. And his teammates and how they cheered for him and were excited for him, that's different than I've seen in most plays.

**Q. How large now is the decision for the third quarterback at the end of preseason and for the flexibility of guys you might want to pick up, and what**



## other cuts you made around the league?

RAHEEM MORRIS: You are always going to score scour. We have the nosiest scouts in the National Football League. I talk about Ryan and Kyle Smith, that crew, Hakeem and all those guys, Sal, all of them.

So much. I know right now Ryan Pace is looking, and he is going to come in and have a fullback on us. We don't even use a fullback. He'll have it on my desk tomorrow. It's just how he is.

He goes and looks and finds ways to get people that are better and keep finding ways to keep churning the bottom of the roster as well as the top as we've seen the last several weeks. I have all the confidence in the world in our guys looking around the league finding people, and then it's up to Terry and I to make those decisions on who can we bring in, how can you make space, whether it's now or whether it's later, whatever the case may be. I really appreciate that about those guys.

**Q. Just could you give us the rationale behind this philosophy that we saw this exhibition season to not play people? We saw a contrast today where they decided to play people, and you all haven't played people. We're trying to figure out in this new age how you get ready for the season by not playing people?**

RAHEEM MORRIS: I think we all are. For me personally and what we have spoken about as a group because we do everything collectively, but I hold more value in the joint practices, the mimic scrimmage, that we do those things.

Hopefully moving forward you want to be able to have four of those joint practices. One set at home, one set in the road, which we do moving forward because of our new facility that we have. We'll be able to get the exhibition game with some of our younger players and go show their stuff and put their stuff on the brightest stage in order to put themselves in the best position to make the football team to get them out there.

Those are the ways where you can mitigate injury of losing people that you are going to count on when it's time to win the real games. Like I mentioned before, you don't get mulligans for losing guys on a team that you are going to count on.

I got a lot of respect for this game that for the guys that we put out there. If I'm putting you out there, it's for an opportunity to do something at a higher level than we think you can do within practice. It's no different than the first game when we had our two safeties go out there and get a little bit of time. We get one injured and pull the other one

because we wanted those two to go and battle for that position to find out who can separate themselves.

So we'll play people based on those decisions, and we'll continue to have that philosophy as long as I'm fortunate enough to be the head coach of the Atlanta Falcons.

**Q. The next few days you're going to be working on the roster and finalizing those things. For the players what will next week look like especially for preparation for Pittsburgh?**

RAHEEM MORRIS: It's still going to be a training camp philosophy for us. You still have the two weeks before that point or at least a week next week. You have to get ready. You make the cutdowns and have a different set of practice because of the amount of people that you have for some of the practices. You have more of a low volume, but you have to get some stuff.

As you put those people back on your roster, you pick up a different intensity with the medium volume or high volume. You get two of those with the jog-through. That will get us right to that mini bye for the players and get them out of the building a little bit and come back and get ready for Pittsburgh.

**Q. Do you have any updates why on Nate Landman and Kaden? They missed the scrimmage the other day.**

RAHEEM MORRIS: They did. I'm going to mess this up, but they definitely both are day-to-day, and I can't remember exactly. You can go ahead and look. David, I know you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Kaden has a groin, and Nate quad.

**Q. Were you in the (indiscernible) huddle?**

RAHEEM MORRIS: I gave him a breakdown with the receivers today because of Trammell who played here. You guys know well. He came out to L.A. with us last year, and I broke it down with their receivers. I did. Guilty.

**Q. Some guys will stay with you. Some guys will be picked up around the league. What is your approach to the sobering reality that this is the last time some of the guys will ever put on football pads?**

RAHEEM MORRIS: That's the part I always talk about that's tough. That's the hardest deal when you are a coach. It's the hardest deal when you are a personnel guy. That's why we value so much sitting down with them and

telling them and being brutally honest but at the same time being compassionate about what we think their beliefs are and how they can further move on.

All you can tell them is your opinion. Then you have players that will go out and prove us wrong and then you have players that go out and find ways. They always respect the fact what they got, the open and honest communication from the Atlanta Falcons, and we'll continue to give people that because we owe them that.

**Q. Earlier this week you talked about the wide receiver room and trying to find a niche and trying to find their spots. Only nine catches today. How much do you pull from the guys that didn't run out on the field today and as to maybe their role?**

RAHEEM MORRIS: Ruke made a couple of tough catches over the middle, which is exciting. Chris Blair came out today and had another couple of exciting catches. They made challenges for us in who you want to keep and how many can you keep and some of those different things.

We had a couple of different perimeter runs with some of the guys and watching them block a little bit on the edge. The wideouts in our division, it's not all about just the recessions. You have to be able to put your face on people in order to create some runs and do some different things.

You have to be able to enjoy the process of those guys learning and doing what you can do every single time. They always make it tough on you, and we'll get together in the next couple of days and kind of figure that out where we want to go next.

**Q. You mentioned Chris Blair. Just what has he shown you over this entire process, training camp, and all the preseason games?**

RAHEEM MORRIS: Been really proud of Chris Blair. When he got here, you really saw him working. I remember walking around the building, not really knowing his name and knowing he was one of the guys in the makeshift weight room that we had in our indoor facility right from the beginning. He was in there for a long time, and he was in there with A.J. Terrell every day.

Then I would come out, and I would watch him run sprints on his own before we even hired a full-time strength coach and was able to be in the building. He was in there working every single day. He would just would walk by me. I was always too embarrassed to ask him, Hey, what's your name?

Then OTA day started, and he went out there and made plays and ran routes. He was able to take coaching and able to do the right things all the time. I remember going out there in the OTAs and making some plays in shorts and not wanting to give him too much credit because it's not as competitive as he wanted to be.

But then he got to camp, switched positions and was able to do a little bit more on that side and learn some more stuff and make stuff a little more versatile. Then I watched him get in the games and handle a mistake and bounce back from a mistake and come out and lead the receiver unit and he was able to go out there have a big game last week and become a captain for us in the preseason and did some really nice things. Those kind of kids, they always make it tough on you in these times.

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