

Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

Sunday, September 8, 2024
Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Head Coach Raheem Morris

Postgame Press Conference

Steelers 18, Falcons 10

RAHEEM MORRIS: Obviously disappointing results. You can't expect anything else when you turn the ball over three times and they won a turnover battle like that. Basically, that's the story of the game.

You've got to go out there and capitalize when you have a chance, and we were not able to do that.

Go ahead.

Q. Coach, do you know what happened on the motion fumble play there? Looked like that kind of --

RAHEEM MORRIS: Basically we've got to get that right. Got the play call in a little bit late. We tried to rush a couple of things. It was a timing thing. That can't happen.

Those things can't happen in the National Football League. He we did that. They got the ball. They fumbled the snap twice. We were not able to get either one of those, and that's the big difference.

It goes back to the turnovers. We got to get that right, and that can't happen.

Q. As a follow-up, the approach in the exhibition season did not translate into real live football here today.

RAHEEM MORRIS: You know, I'm not really concerned with that. I think that is about mitigating injuries. So we wouldn't have played nothing but ten snaps anyway if we did play, and we did not. I don't even value that as much as you do.

I know you may have an opportunity to think that way, but you got to go out there and execute when you get your opportunities to play in this league, and that's what's got to



happen.

Q. Obviously it didn't look like you wanted it to offensively. How much of that at first blush would you credit to y'all, and how much of that would you credit to just you couldn't block them?

RAHEEM MORRIS: You never want to take credit away from your opponent, and they did a great job in doing what they can do. We have to go out and have the ability to execute against anybody, and we have to execute the plays you want to execute.

When you play a team like this, the Pittsburgh Steelers, with the defense they have, you know it's going to be a dirty game, but we had our opportunities. We got the ball back with a chance to go score. We made a couple of big stops in the red zone. We had a couple of opportunities to go down there and make this thing and take the lead.

We came out end of the half with a 10-9 lead. We have to maintain that thing and find a way to get down the field, have some drives, and put it together like we did the first time out when we took the possession of the game to be able to do some of those things. We were not able to do it the second half.

Q. Without being able to look at it again on the tape, can you tell why you couldn't?

RAHEEM MORRIS: Those guys made plays. We turned the ball over in the second half, hitting people in the face and some of the things of that nature. We can't do that.

We have to play better all across the board, some of the blocking, some of the protection, being comfortable. All those things come into play. So we'll go back and look at it and find out and get to the root of it in practice and go through our process.

Q. Looking at it live, it looked like when you all did try to pass, the pocket was closing pretty fast. Did that limit some of the things you wanted to do to attack them on offense?

RAHEEM MORRIS: They limit that when you line up against these guys. That's kind of the team they are. T.J. Watt is that kind of guy. He's always going to go out there and cause those kind of problems. You have to give him credit just being who he is.

He had two sacks today. He jumped off sides early and got one that looked a little scary, but he was way off sides. He jumped up pretty clear. You have to go there and maintain them and can't let him wreck the game, and he was able to wreck it by getting that fumble recovery and also getting a couple of key sacks there to too get those things going.

Q. The defense was impressive today not allowing touchdowns and holding the offense to six field goals. What are your thoughts on their performance for the day?

RAHEEM MORRIS: You can't just necessarily go off of what happened with the results. We have to stop those guys in earlier downs in the run game. They had some success running the football on it us, but I was really proud of those guys and what they were able to do with their resiliency in the red zone and then after those turnovers. You have to give those guys that type of credit.

With it being one game, we have to find ways to get the ball back ourselves. We have to find ways to force turnovers to give our guys a short field to be able to go out and score, and we were not able to do that today.

But I was very proud of how they stood up and showed mental toughness and real grit down the stretch.

Q. Curious kind of where you think this team goes from here considering that you don't get off on the start that you want. So what's the messaging going into a big week and with the Monday Night Football game coming up?

RAHEEM MORRIS: All these things are the same. They're all learning episodes. They're all learning opportunities. Whether you win, whether you lose, they're all the same for us coaches, right?

You have to learn from wins. You have to learn from losses, and we will certainly learn from this loss.

Q. Drake and Kyle only combined for five catches and 41 yards. Did you sense frustration from them during the game, and just in general, were you surprised at the lack of offensive production, especially in that second half?

RAHEEM MORRIS: Of course, you're going to sense frustration from really competitive people wanting to get the ball in their hands to make a difference.

I don't look at that as a negative. I look at that as competitors wanting to go out there and help their football team win any way they can. Kyle was able to get the touchdown. We didn't get the ball to Drake enough.

Hey, you want to get the ball to Bijan more. You want to be able to run the football a lot. You have to maintain possessions. You have to keep some possessions. You can't turn the football over.

When you do that, you limit the chance to get your playmakers the ball, and all those things hurt you. That's always going to hurt your production with turnovers.

Q. Raheem, it's only Week 1. How do you evaluate Kirk Cousins getting into this offense, how he played, but also knowing what needs to be done in the next week because you do have the Eagles and Chiefs for Monday Night Football and Sunday Night Football?

RAHEEM MORRIS: You better look at them one at a time. We have the Eagles. We have to worry about that on Monday Night Football.

We have the extra time to go out there and prepare. We have the extra time to go look at it. For Kirk we know he has to play better. There's no doubt about that. I look forward to him doing that.

He's played in the league for a long time, and I look forward to him bouncing back from a rough game and a rough outing. I'm not overly concerned with that.

Q. Coach, how did you all handle the quarterback confusion with Fields and Wilson, and when did you all figure that it was all go for Fields?

RAHEEM MORRIS: We figured it out when you figured it out. When they let us know and they announced it at the time they have to announce it.

For us it's preparation for both of them. I think our defensive guys did a nice job of preparing for them. When you are talking about Fields, you are talking about incorporating more of the quarterback running scheme.

He was able to punch it out on that last one and really continued that full minute drive going at the end with a nice quarterback run drive with his legs.

Other than that, I thought we did a nice job. I believe he hit

one sneak. We stopped one sneak. I think we did a nice job on some of the zone read things, keeping him out of the pocket. He did a nice job of getting to the edge in the perimeter and the keeper game, which they both do really well.

It's football, man. You have to be ready for everybody every single week, and that will never change.

Q. Kirk never looked very comfortable in the pocket. Did you sense that that was some rust from having been off, some worry about the injury, just the fact that they were getting home so much?

RAHEEM MORRIS: You know, it's the Pittsburgh Steelers. They're a good defense. You got T.J. Watt out there and Highsmith out there. You have a bunch of good cover guys. You have a bunch of good guys across the board.

Maybe he didn't get comfortable. Those are things you have to evaluate when look at the tape. We have to get comfortable and do it with an urgent manner.

Q. Maybe this is the wrong word, but how surprised were you by this offensive performance?

RAHEEM MORRIS: Surprised? You can't be surprised in the National Football League. I've seen so much and been around so much where you don't have good days, but you better take them all as learning experiences and be able to go out and learn from them. We have to go out there and figure out a way to fix that quickly and urgently.

Q. Following up on that, there's plenty that you have to build on, to work on, but what did you see on the offense that you can build on? What positives were there?

RAHEEM MORRIS: That first drive was exactly what you wanted. It was efficient. We were executing. We went on out and were able to run the ball effectively. We got a couple of passes off effectively.

We got there and weren't able to finish it off with the touchdown. We got three. We got it right at the end there and got the seven points to Kyle and got some effective passes, moved the ball down the field, threw a touchdown.

Then when we came out the second half, I was expecting and hoping to build on that. We lost a little bit of our edge and things of that nature to get it done. A couple of penalties hurt us with the holding on one from the backed up situation.

Bijan had a couple of really good runs. He was able to execute on some screens. He's a guy, and I was really pleased with the way he played the game just with the mental toughness and the ability to go out there and continue to try to make us win and putting us in a winning position, although we were not able to come out with it.

Q. To follow up on that, if my math is correct, I believe that Bijan touched the ball in over 60% of all offensive plays for you guys today. Do you like that number? Would you like it to be a bit more balanced throughout with the rest of the guys, or is Bijan that type of talent that you are like over 60% sounds good?

RAHEEM MORRIS: I like winning, and that wasn't the result we got today. So we have to go back to the lab and figure out a way to win. Whatever that is, we'll do.

Q. What's your sense of how Justin Simmons and Matthew Judon played today?

RAHEEM MORRIS: Very hard to judge those guys. I did see the big plays that we all clearly saw. Justin Simmons making a big knock-down pass I believe in the third down. I believe Matthew Judon was a part of the sack, if not having the whole sack.

Later in that second half and how he was able to play, I watched him set a couple of edges and play really well and do a couple of really good things.

There's a bunch of positive aspects. Obviously as a coach that's what we see. Obviously as the media what we see is the negative portion of whatever we're going to look at.

But we'll go back and correct those things. You can't ride the emotional roller coaster whether you want to be positive about Judon or positive about Justin. We have to have reality checks for ourselves to be able to go out there and correct it.

Q. We've been talking a lot about the offense, but going back to the defense, specifically Grady Jarrett, he had a sack and a half today. What was it like seeing him out there again?

RAHEEM MORRIS: Watching him bounce back with excellence, which you expect, is something that you always really enjoy. Probably some of the few times today you were able to see emotion when a guy like that is, who is bigger than the game of football for us in our community, makes a plays coming off the injury and the significance of his injury that he came back from last year and be able to see his mother and his family out there today really support him is always something that you are always going to look

back and smile at no matter what the outcome is because
of that guy and that human.

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