

Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

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Kirk Cousins

Postgame Press Conference



Atlanta 27 - Dallas 21

KIRK COUSINS: A workman like day today. I came in at halftime and just was communicating to the teammates that it felt like a game we were going to have to grind out, they were going to make us earn every play, every yard, and it felt that way, especially through the late in the third, into the fourth. I thought that teammates stepped up, substantially in Drake's absence, KhaDarel Hodge stepping up. Mooney made some big plays for us. Bijan Robinson showed up in the run game, pass game quite a bit. Tyler Allgeier's touchdown run was phenomenal. More of the same from him. Had a lot of great protection a lot of time on the touchdown to Ray Ray. It's so fun to be a progressive passer and have an offensive line that really gives you the time to tick through. So great job there, and unbelievable catch by Drake on the touchdown. That's really what he does among other things so well is that jump ball, high point contested catch, strong hands. Love playing with a guy like that, being able to just put the ball up for him and told him we really haven't had enough plays like that this year. I told him earlier this week when we were meeting. So it was fun to see that come alive in the game for a touchdown. And, yeah, now we just gotta keep building, keep stacking and always good to drive home now after a win. I'll take any questions you have.

Q. Kirk, could you discuss the overall efficiency of the offense and the importance of that drive to start the second half after the three and out you all were able to go down and get a score there.

KIRK COUSINS: I think that was an important drive. To answer, I thought both scoring drives in the second half felt like really important drives and plays, and being two or two on fourth down, I go back several games, our fourth down plays have continued to make a major difference in our offensive production. And, yeah, there's plenty there to clean up. I mean 4 for 13 on third down is not what we want. So there's still a lot there that you felt like wasn't as sharp as we are capable of being.

Q. Kirk, I know you weren't here last year, but there seems to be a palpable shift with this team and the chemistry and the culture. Kaden Elliss called it special. What do you pinpoint that makes this team special sitting where you are right now in the season?

KIRK COUSINS: Yeah. I think whenever you're winning, you certainly feel like the wind is at your back more, and yet it is such a week to week league that I've learned that maybe you have a tough loss and maybe things don't feel as special, if you will. And it's just kind of that week to week nature of our league, but I think it starts with Raheem Morris as our head coach setting the tone each week and allowing guys to feel comfortable to be themselves and to play with great effort, and then from there it kind of trickles down to our captains and our locker room, and we just gotta keep challenging each other, keep going out to practice each day with an edge and with an attention to detail and believe that if you do that, good things will happen on Sundays and the wins will start to stack up.

Q. Kirk, you talked this week about looking for ways to get yourself in sort of that right mindset pregame. I wonder if at any point in your career you used past relationships, I'm thinking of Coach Zimmer today --

KIRK COUSINS: Yes. Yeah.

Q. -- to sort of drive yourself in that way, to prove yourself I'm going to show X, Y and Z or maybe not exactly that way.

KIRK COUSINS: I thought today was unique facing Coach Zim because I did feel like he was doing a good job of keeping us guessing, keeping us kind of, oh, okay, now he's doing this, oh, wait, they just changed to this, okay, now he's pressuring or okay, now he's bluffing. That's why I felt it was a grind was I felt like he had a good plan for us. And there were a couple of times in the way he defended us I thought that was smart. That was a good approach. And I think that's probably why we did have some challenges in and some of the drives did stall.

Q. But do you feel any validation for having success against that today?



KIRK COUSINS: Well, I think there was positives, but there were also a lot we left out there. I think when you look at some of the production like the touchdown to Drake, I mean that's just kind of a player more than a play, if you will. And the same with Mooney a little bit in the coverage there. That was kind of a tough look for them. It's a challenging deal. But it was hard earned today. I felt that.

Q. Kirk, talk about how big Bijan has been as a receiver. He didn't score per se but he had seven receptions?

KIRK COUSINS: He's a big deal. He's a big deal. When I got here, I wanted to be a receiver for us, I wanted to show up in the pass game. I want to check the ball down to him. I want to put the ball in his hands. And my background would be whether it was Chris Thompson in Washington or Dalvin Cook in Minnesota. I see a running back as a running back, and I also see them as a receiver, and Bijan has a lot of ability catching the football, and I love when he shows up in our pass game, too.

Q. This week you quoted something from Coach Morris, and you said was it a game or was it your game?

KIRK COUSINS: Yeah, right.

Q. So what would your answer to be to Coach after today's performance?

KIRK COUSINS: Well, I think it's something you answer probably more in February. But it was a positive day to come out with a win, and guys made plays. We spread it around again. But there's always going to be things I'm going to nitpick and we can be better in and would have loved to have pulled away, but we weren't able to do that as much today. Dallas stood up tough in the second half and made it hard for us to kind of be able to pull away the way we wanted.

Q. You sort of talked about this team, obviously you didn't talk about, but they've struggled at the quarterback position the last few years and I'm sure you saw an opportunity to come here with a lot of weapons. Has this sort of been how you envisioned when you were laying this out how it could work that if you could come in here and produce, they had the team and this could turn around here?

KIRK COUSINS: Yeah, it's so week to week. Certainly the Pittsburgh wasn't what I envisioned. The Kansas City game wasn't what I envisioned. The Seattle game wasn't

what I envisioned. So it goes both ways. And even in some of our wins you feel like there's a lot more that we're capable of. So the challenge as a player in this league is trying to chase a standard that is potentially unrealistic, but you're still going to chase it and demand it, and it can leave you wanting more when you walk away from each game. But I do believe that when you hold yourself to a high standard, it tends to lead to the best results possible.

Q. Kirk, you talk about that Mooney touchdown. It was a tough look defensively for them with that bunch set. Where was he in your progression on that touchdown?

KIRK COUSINS: Yeah, it's a little complicated answer because you cover zero, you kind of only have time to work one receiver. So I had a decision to make kind of presnap as to where to go and felt like made an educated decision, I guess educated guess that I think Mooney will be my best option, and Mooney made me right. But it was a tough pressure look, and we were kind of fortunate there to be able to get a big explosive in a moment like that.

Q. And then how much fun is it for you to be able to divvy the ball up to so many different guys at any moment in the game?

KIRK COUSINS: Yeah, you want to be multiple just so the defenses have to honor all five eligibles and have to kind of play you that way as opposed to leaning towards somebody heavily and making the looks more difficult. But we also feel like there's a lot of people on our offense that can help us, and I think you all know that. But the more we can spread it around the better.

Q. Kirk, I'm curious, when you have a winning streak like this and you're 6 and 3 right now, is there a time where you still need to talk to a young team and give a message versus like when you have a losing streak or you just lost a big one, it's time for a message then. But when you're on a winning streak, is there still time for a message or need for a message just to keep everybody at ease?

KIRK COUSINS: I just think there's a message and a mindset you have to carry in every week. This league will beat you up and it's so tough. It's such a grind. As one coach used to say to me, he's like, hey, we're checking into a miserable hotel for six months. That's the way it is. And so we all need encouragement. We all need motivation. Football is such an emotional game. You have to find that emotion each week, and you can't be waiting on someone else to provide it for you each week, but at the same time you are aware of the need to make sure our team is in the right mental space and emotional space each week. And

sometimes you aren't, and it can lead to poor performances. So as a captain, as captain and leaders, you try to have your pulse on that, and the message can be anything. But you try to understand what guys need to hear to play at their best that Sunday.

Q. Kirk, you mentioned week to week league and trying to stay focused, but this town, this fanbase has been starved for a winner for a long time. Maybe can you sense that through your family connections here and everything?

KIRK COUSINS: Yeah.

Q. Of kind of what you're starting to build here? 6 and 3 is fun for the fanbase, Kirk. I know you're week to week, but it's fun for you. But can you sense what's building here?

KIRK COUSINS: Well, you know, I thought the fanbase wise when you're playing Dallas, you never know just how much are you going to see Cowboys fans in the crowd, and I thought our fanbase really stepped up today to make it a home field advantage for us. The Swag Surfin' in the fourth quarter was tremendous. The Nest continues to bring it every week, even during TV timeouts, which is amazing. So that's what it's all about.

I was with a retired quarterback this spring and had recently signed with Atlanta and he was talking to me and unsolicited he said, you know, Kirk, when I was in free agency and I was looking where to go, part of what I thought about was the city you go to if you win, what would that be like in that city. And he said, I look at you and Atlanta, and I say, that could be really fun if you win. That could be a really special place to win. And he said, you gotta be excited about that. And so I thought that was a good perspective to have, that this is a city that when you come here and you get the job done, there's a lot to look forward to in terms of what the city -- how we can all come together. So you do it one week at a time to get there, and you kind of see where you stand in February, but certainly a big part of playing football, a privilege it is to play quarterback, to quarterback this team is to try to create that community together as we win.

Q. Kirk, you're a year removed from your surgery now. I'm just wondering where do you think you are with your mobility and your comfort level out there?

KIRK COUSINS: Yeah. I think it's been pretty consistent as of late. I don't really think too much about the Achilles as I'm playing. If anything, it's just so sturdy that I really trust it, and so I feel pretty good. I've always kind of been a pocket passer, but today there were a couple of times that I

wish I had taken off and run, and just as a pocket passer, I've had this conversation with many of you, that you want to go through your progression, but at the same time you want to take off and run, and a couple of times today I thought the better decision would have been to take off and run and I didn't. And that was something I wanted to do differently. But keep leaning from each of those plays and try to put that Achilles to work running the football at times.

Q. On the play to Mooney that Murray was talking about, I'm wondering sort of in laymen's terms, what are you using to diagnose where that read needs to be and at this point in your career what's your comfort level like that yeah I'm going to be right. I feel good about this throw?

KIRK COUSINS: Yeah. There's definitely a growth process of learning from past experiences. It's all-out pressure. As Gary Kubiak used to tell me, the ball's gotta go. It's gotta go somewhere quickly, and I had Bijan on a double move to my left and had Mooney on my right and had Kyle on a shallow cross. All three had potential there versus man coverage. They both all three need to win quickly, and I just felt best about drifting right and trying to work Mooney knowing the ball had to be out quick, and he made me right.

Q. At what point in that play do you know it's the right decision?

KIRK COUSINS: I think the ball was maybe two-thirds of the way there, and I thought he's pretty open. This has potential. And then he had to catch it and he had to finish. That was a good feeling.

Q. You guys have converted a lot of fourth downs over the course of the first half of this season. Raheem said that a big part of that is because of the competitive edge that you bring and the aggressive way that you play. And I'm curious from your perspective maybe why you think that is and why these fourth downs are mattering so much for you guys?

KIRK COUSINS: Yeah. I don't know. I wish we'd do it on third down, or second and first, you know. So it doesn't have to come down to fourth down. But certainly your head coach has to be willing to put that out there and be aggressive and go for it, and that's a challenge for many times to make that call, but he's been consistent in how he wants to approach it. And then Zac has to be very quick thinking to react in the moment, okay, we are going to go for it. What do I like in such a critical situation. So a lot of credit goes to Zac as far as what he's dialing up quickly on these fourth downs, and then you're going to get people's

best rush, so protection has been holding up. You're going to get tight coverage. Guys have been separating and winning. So it kind of all adds up to production. But I go back to what I've said so many times. I just try to be the point guard distributor, and so many other pieces have to step up, too, coaches and players, and when they do, that's when it gets really fun to be that distributor.

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