

Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

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Coach Raheem Morris Postgame Press Conference



Falcons, 15 - Raiders - 9

RAHEEM MORRIS: Always nice to see friendly faces after a win. Haven't had any in a while, so the guys are particularly excited about that, be back on the winning ways. Had a lot of things to fix and a lot of things to clean up, and I look forward to getting with the guys tomorrow. We have a short week with the next couple of days and getting ready to play another football game.

Q. Could you discuss what you all were setting up there for at the end on the two Hail Marys?

RAHEEM MORRIS: Like, what do you mean?

Q. You all were talking on the sidelines, called a timeout.

RAHEEM MORRIS: We were looking at formation, seeing what they were coming out in, determine whether it was 2-by-2, was it MV [phonetic], 3-by-1, whether it be a punch, how were they going to get the point, all the little details that go within those situations.

The play before that wasn't really, didn't think it was going to be a Hail Mary, potentially trying to get closer. Out-of-bounds play, get ready for that, stop them getting out of bounds, get to field position, maybe a 25-yard play in that zone.

We were ready for all those things, all those things were being discussed on the sidelines between myself and JD and all the guys as part of that, Tim and all the guys a part of situational football, and I think it was really well done by those guys.

Q. Could you discuss the rushing attack today? (Indiscernible) Bijan had over 100 and now Jared ran pretty hard for you today.

RAHEEM MORRIS: We leaned on them heavy, obviously. We came out and they were particularly hot. We were

able to get off the ball and run the football, those guys, and our guys came out. Like to punch a few more of those things for touchdown, lean on the run game a lot, leaned on them heavy, and those guys went out and performed at a high level today. Lot of credit to their coach and what they were able to do and their coaching staff.

Q. You went with more big personnel defensively than you have been. Was that something you saw from your group or was that opponent-specific to them?

RAHEEM MORRIS: I think we were almost kind of leaning that way when it comes to bigger people on the grass.

We had the last couple of weeks, we leaned on a couple of big people, couple of big personnels. A little bit had to do with they came out in, they came out in a little bit at 13, came out at a lot of 12, obviously, because that's what they are. So that allowed us to play with a little more people as opposed to playing 11 team like us and getting out there, a lot of snaps, playing with those personnel.

Q. Why did you lean so heavily on the running game today? I think Kirk didn't throw at all on first down in the first half.

RAHEEM MORRIS: I think it was just a hot hand. We had a lot to work on, a lot of things we wanted get done, realistically, it was a hot hand today. It was controlling the game and controlling the time to possession and field position. And special teams were hot. They blocking punts, playing really well, playing really well on defense. They were not able to move the ball, and I just thought it was a smart play today for us to go out there and find a way to win.

I think the most important thing, when you come off a couple of losses in a row, particularly (inaudible), feel good about it, you find a way to get a win and you gain confidence through getting wins. That's what our guys did.

Q. We talked a lot about red zone efficiency, and this is another game that, yes, there was control in the way you were all starting drives. You had good field position the entire time but was 0-for-0 in the red zone,



could you get there? What needs to change in order to create more efficiency in the red area?

RAHEEM MORRIS: Pretty simple, you've got to score. We've got to get down there. We've got great field position today, a bunch of opportunities, whether you want to talk about off the block punts or turnovers, whatever the case may be. I don't care whether you run it in or throw it in, we've got to be way more efficient. We gotta figure out how to get that better in practice, and that's going to happen for us in the long run, the overall template of what we want to be, how we can be it.

Q. The hot hand was the rush game and that's what you saw. Can you assess Kirk's play tonight and where you're at? I know you guys got the W, but in terms of him starting quarterback moving forward.

RAHEEM MORRIS: He's got to play better. Obviously you've got to go out there and look at everything. He wants to play better. He's got to play better. We've got to find a way to get him to play better. And obviously we'll get to work tomorrow and that's part of our process, to go and look at the tape and review with the people that it needs to be reviewed, with all the coordinators in the room and talk with everybody. We've got to play better at the quarterback position.

Q. Part B to that, if he can't, are you prepared to replace him with Michael Penix?

RAHEEM MORRIS: We've got everybody on our roster for a reason. We've got so much to get better at. And those things will always be discussed. That's just the nature of the beast in football. It's so heavily when at the quarterback position it's only one guy out there.

For us, man, our mentality is to find a way to win the next game. That's just the mentality for that.

Q. The decision to not kick the 55-yarders, you had two of them there. You tried to pull them offsides. Could you walk us through those?

RAHEEM MORRIS: Definitely we had two decisions there and definitely decided to pin them back. The one, we pinned them back and they kicked the touchback, pretty upset about that. Bradley (inaudible). We came right back and we got them on the 2 and was able to get a safety. That was the execution we were looking for for our guys, and I thought it was really well done by special teams tonight.

We played a little soccer, let's just be honest, played a keep-away game, make those guys drop the field all the

way down the field, try to beat us with touchdowns. They were able to do it once tonight. We were able to keep them out of the end zone for the most part and we found a way to get a win.

Q. Did you speak to Dez after the game or before...

RAHEEM MORRIS: I didn't see him before the game. I wouldn't have done that to him. I think that's rude.

I did not see him in that huddle. Definitely looked for him a little bit. I know Terry definitely spoke with him. He's got a closer relationship with Dez than I do. I was only with him for a short amount of time. I thought Dez came out, did a nice job was. Definitely serviceable for those guys.

Q. And obviously you saw something in the kicking game. You got your hands on three kicks today. Is that something you felt like could you do coming in, or was that a surprise to you?

RAHEEM MORRIS: Honestly, it's just one of those things that, every week, if you really look close, Red, he is absolutely unbelievable. Football type talent, special teams, gives great effort. The man scored a touchdown this year. He's blocked a kick. Almost blocked a couple others. The way he rushes the passes, and the way he plays, the intensity he plays, and the respect he has for his teammates it's unprecedented. That's always been something we try to exploit, particularly with Marquice and what he wants to do and how he wants to do it.

I think there's a reason people are trying to fake punts on us because of how aggressive we play. They play aggressive and they play sound and smart football, and that's a big credit to those guys and our coaching staff.

Q. I'm curious about, you know the NBA Cup has been playing here in Las Vegas. The Hawks were playing. My question is about that format. Not by another title in the middle of the decision, do you think it's something that could be possible in the NFL?

RAHEEM MORRIS: I don't think we need it. Like, a lot of these teams have 82-game seasons. They have a lot of season to play. This thing is a format for a championship week every single week.

I believe it's the best professional sport amongst them all. It's hard to -- I argue that with one of my owners at least, half of them, but I believe it's the best professional sport well done as any as you can do it. And I don't think we need a tournament.

But if they sign us up for a tournament, they sign us up.

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We'll go play. It's a lot of fun to be out there competing. It's a lot of fun to go out there and compete every single week. I don't think we need a tournament for us. Let's go Hawks. Did they win today?

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Q. No, they lost. The final is tomorrow. You don't talk about him all that often, but how key and clutch was Bradley Pinion's performance today?

RAHEEM MORRIS: Outstanding. And we do; we talk about him a bunch. He's one of our leaders, one of our community leaders, the stuff that he does. The city of Atlanta, the things he does for our team. He's like a third coach on special teams because of his knowledge, his experience, the things that he brings to our younger players.

He does whatever he wants to do with the ball; he's a magician. I give him a lot of credit. He's one of the best holders in the league, puts the ball down laces up every single time. There's no flaws in his game in what he's asked to do. And we love him. I hold him in high respect, high regard.

Q. Piggybacking off the NBA Cup, of course, with the Hawks playing in the NBA Cup, there's a lot of Atlanta fans out here and chants of "ATL" today. And just your thoughts on the fan support on the West Coast.

RAHEEM MORRIS: That was absolutely outstanding. Had a little "ATL" chant going there. I think I've seen some of our owners out there dancing and going along with those guys in the stands.

I thought it was really well done by our fans, our guys, our people. The ATL is a sports town. We want to make it that way. We want to find a way to go out there and win football games and win basketball games, to make it exciting.

I think that's part of what Arthur Blank does for our city and what the whole Blank family bring, ABSC -- I might have messed that up there. But I think we're doing a nice job of doing that for our city.

Q. Now that you're all back at 7-7, one game back for the division, but the playoff picture is still wide open. How do you all move forward here with the end of the season?

RAHEEM MORRIS: Relative football in December. That's where you want to be. That's exactly where we're at. We're one game at a time. We have a short week. Get back in the lab. We've gotta find ways to fix things we did wrong tonight and try to come out and get another one.

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