

Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

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Raheem Morris

Postgame Press Conference



New York Giants 7 - Atlanta Falcons 34

RAHEEM MORRIS: Really good team effort. Both offensive, defense and special teams. Couldn't be more pleased the way the team played today, the way they responded. Really rallied behind a young man. He went out and played almost flawless football and kept the game really clean and kept everything clean for us in order for us to get a win. I was really pleased with the efforts today.

Q. Coach, Newberry is retiring after four years with the Associated Press. Lets let him open it up today.

RAHEEM MORRIS: That's awesome. Glad to send you out with a win.

Q. You mentioned Penix keeping it clean obviously it helps when you have two pick sixes, but just his performance has to be kind of gratifying to you to make such a tough switch here at this time of the year and for him to come through like that?

RAHEEM MORRIS: I would say it's gratifying to us as an organization. I don't take any personal recognition or any personal pride behind those type of decisions. Those decisions will always be made as a collaborative effort between myself, Terry, our management crew and all the people that we involve with those things along with our ownership. And it's a great job by us. It's a great job by how we wanted to manage it, how we wanted to get him out there. Like we mentioned this week, the plan came a little bit sooner, but the kid was ready. We had a lot of time to develop him. The kid did a great job himself developing himself and getting ready for that moment where it wasn't too big, and I was really proud and pleased that he was able to go out there and play today.

Q. Could you also address the play of Bijan Robinson and getting the two pick sixes from Bates and Matthew Judon?

RAHEEM MORRIS: Bijan has been outstanding all year in

the things that he's able to do. He's special. If it wasn't for his other guy out in Philly, he'd get a lot more recognition across the league. But that guy is having a special year. Bijan is not far behind him. I don't know exactly what the stats are because you know those things are for losers, but I love the fact that Bijan is on our team. I love the fact what he's able to do all the time. And just talking about defense, you gotta give the whole defense credit in how they're rushing as a unit, how they're playing as a unit and all the things just getting better throughout the season. What they've been able to do since the bye really has been really impressive, and going out there and scoring touchdowns on defense those are things that happen when you get a chance to put people behind the eight ball, being able to stop the run and getting into some of the pass situations allowing guys like Jessie Bates and Judon make plays.

Q. Coach, you give out game balls --

RAHEEM MORRIS: I did not today actually.

Q. No game balls?

RAHEEM MORRIS: You believe that? I was so excited to let these guys know. Not today. I will. I mean I should give the whole team the game ball you know, the way they played as a team, the way they played as a unit. We'll do that soon enough.

Q. And you've talked a little bit about Jessie Bates' interception, return for a touchdown, but just how big was that in the second quarter, like a big momentum shift that gave you guys the lead that you guys relinquished.

RAHEEM MORRIS: It's hard to say to be little anytime you get a pick six or you get a chance to score on defense or special teams like we've done before, and when you do those things, those are big momentum shifts. Those things shift the way the game is going to be played. Those things shift the way you call the game. Those things shift about everything that you want to do. When you maintain that lead and finish like a pro. Realistically for us having two first-time play callers, those are great growing and developing moments for us when you're talking about the



coaches, but young Zac Robinson how to manage that football game and keep us out of harm's way. And I think we had a 12-play drive in the second half and a 15-play drive in the second half, and that's outstanding. Jimmy Lake going out there and being able to get a couple of three-and-outs, and Marquice just continuing to stay aggressive. I don't know if that was a blocked punt, a shank, whatever it was, but playing aggressive on special teams allow people not to get comfortable. And I love the aggression. I love the mentality from the whole coaching staff and the players, and like I said, couldn't be more proud of the guys and how they performed.

Q. Raheem, you mentioned the other day how Penix's athleticism kind of can change things for you. How did you see that play out today?

RAHEEM MORRIS: I think we only had one time to see him really scramble and one other time where he was able to get away and throw the ball away. Those little subtle athletic movements are things that just we've seen since we've got him, you know, honestly, that we did not see on college tape, you know, at least last year. Some of the things that he's been able to do with us in training camp and being able to tell me that he was going to run away from somebody and all those things I got a chance to see today. So to see it happen live in good moments with a slide on one big-time gain and another one just being able to get away from a sack and throw the football away, those are grown men professional type plays that you love to see from your young quarterback.

Q. Coach, are you going to watch the Tampa Bay-Dallas game as a coaching staff or just focus on Washington next weekend?

RAHEEM MORRIS: No. We'll watch those things the way they go about their business, right? Obviously after the game the coaches will all go home. We'll get an early jump on some of the things that's going on with the Washington Commanders to then get ready for that Sunday night football game that's coming next week because that's big time for us. We're really worried about ourselves. We're really focused on what we have to do as opposed to everybody else and like we'll let those guys go out and sweat that out, man. We'll go out and get ready to play next game.

Q. Coach, what's the difference between the Michael Penix that you had today out there and the one that came into camp all those months ago?

RAHEEM MORRIS: That's a great question. I would say the rapport of Zac Robinson. I would say the ability to go out there and be really comfortable spitting out all the plays

and know exactly what the purpose of the play is, the clean footwork, the ability to know some of the whys of the concepts, like the zone, the ability to go out there and be able to retain the information, be able to bring it to the sideline and be able to communicate and talk through situational football. I think the guy is just a grown adult that came in with a high level of football experience that's done nothing over the last 14 or 15 weeks, whatever it's been of working that into his game, and I couldn't be more proud of the young man.

Q. Obviously you touched on it here throughout this press conference, but is there a sense of relief? I mean you've seen him on the practice field, you've worked with him behind the scenes not. So you knew what you had. But to see it translate during a live game, how much of a relief is that for you and your staff right now?

RAHEEM MORRIS: I don't know. That's kind of a soft word that I don't like to use when you say relief. I just got confidence, you know, like in the young man. Like I was talking to ownership today. I was just talking to those guys about how well he practiced and talking about some of the things that he did and what really looked good for us, because like we have all these great questions when we're talking amongst each other, what's going to look different, how are we going to manage the game. And we were able to really clearly put those in dialect for whoever is asking, whoever we're talking to when we're talking about certain things. I just think that it came to fruition today. I don't know if it was a sense of relief. It was just being able to watch him go execute it during the game. Like I knew we created the situations in practice with our mamba period, making it tough on them. I knew we were able to create those things with him being able to go out there and simulate things versus our first team defense and to watch him grow and develop even behind Kirk when he was the No. 2 and how he prepared. So like just to watch him go do it was more fun to watch than actual relief. It wasn't a relief. For me it was more just a sense of pride.

Q. Mechanics are everything when it comes to quarterback accuracy. How do you view Michael Penix, Jr., purely from a mechanical perspective?

RAHEEM MORRIS: I think that was a narrative from the draft, however you want to look at it, from the quarterback experts on what you like and what you don't like. What I loved about Michael was his ability to get the ball out of his hand and some of those things. When you're talking about small detail and mechanics that you can change whenever you really feel like it from a quarterback standpoint of where you are in the pocket, where you want to throw from the pocket, what platform you want to throw from, those

things are very easy and simple to be done and easily articulated, whether it be T.J. or Doug Williams, Jr., actually articulating that to him, and to be able to watch him go do that stuff and seamlessly go through his motion and his rhythm of how you get the ball out, it's pretty for us. Like those things don't really matter as much as the kid's accuracy, the kid's arm talent, his mind, what's between his eyes and all those things that he has that in a big way. And that's what he showed us throughout the draft process. So to be able to watch him go articulate and do those things today was absolutely outstanding. Like you'll always be able to critique footwork. We can critique that in anything that we do, any position that we coach, any position that we play, and we'll always be able to have a chance to go back and correct some of those things and find out if we can get it better.

Q. Am I right that the mamba period just mean 1s vs. 1s?

RAHEEM MORRIS: Usually means 1s vs. 1s, good-on-good competition, a non scout team look. However you want to look at that when you just got a chance to go out there and really preview some plays, whether it be blitzes, whether it be a situation that you might not see unless it comes up in a game, and that's a competitive period for both Jimmy Lake and Zac Robinson to go against each other. And you can get a little bit of fighting with those two in those periods, and I really love that, a chance to go out there and really officiate those things for me, whether it be a two-minute situation or whatever it is with him that he needs to get better at, and you got a real good look at Michael throughout the year and throughout the season in all those periods.

Q. Did you do more of them this week just to help prep him?

A. No. We kept the same amount of mamba periods, changed up a couple things that we thought he might meet, like a two-minute situation. I was able to change up a couple that he might meet as far as a first, second down, third down in a row back to back, but we kept the same rhythm and routine that we normally have, just gave him a couple of different things that I thought like he would benefit from not played in the games prior.

Q. Were there any markers you were looking for as you went through this week to give you some comfort that he was in fact ready and was in fact going to respond the way you thought you would? And can you relay any of those if there was a moment where you thought, you checked a box in your mind?

RAHEEM MORRIS: Tuesday when we made the decision.

He passed that marker, and he passed those markers up to that point, were ready to go with him stepping on the field and then his practice week and his rhythm and his routine that he was able to go out there and show us just gave us more confidence.

Q. Can you identify a favorite play at this point? I mean I know you have to go back and watch the film, but was there something that happened out there?

RAHEEM MORRIS: Talking about specifically Michael or just the team in general.

Q. Yeah. Michael?

A. I enjoy football entirely too much to pick a favorite play from Mike, but I just enjoy the fact of him coming off the field, being able to verbalize things when he went wrong and being able to communicate those things to us very clearly. That's a sign of an adult. That's a sign it's a different form of maturity for us and those are things for me that I really covet.

Q. Doing it in practice is one thing but was there maybe a moment we didn't see or wouldn't recognize that was an is successful play that you felt he was ready for the moment today, that he could basically own the responsibility of leading this team?

RAHEEM MORRIS: You've been there every week, had a chance to see those guys out there and play and compete or not. But you've been around and like I think those moments have just been accumulating throughout the season. Like you see wow moments, whether it be throwing the football, or you see wow moments of things that he saw and was able to articulate to us in a practice setting, and then he was able to go do it today. It's just what he's been doing since he's been here.

Q. Raheem, you said a few moments ago that you saw the pass rush coming that was here right now. What was it that you saw in the pass and what are they doing right now that's making you guys so effective of getting to the quarterback?

RAHEEM MORRIS: I think we talked about it before, man. I was telling Lane, it's coming. I can see it in practice and how we're practicing and getting better. But really, over the last couple of weeks they cracked the code and they got a feel, they're rushing together. When you get four guys all running together, that's how it happens the best and then when you add that fifth element where you're able to have the fake fifth element, all of those things happen where you know where your space is where you take your shots and really take those chances and those opportunities and

they're really making the most out of it, whether it's Kaden Elliss, whether it's big Ruke, whether it's A.K., who's really dominated over the last couple of weeks. I'm really proud of how they're rushing together. You know, Matthew Judon, like it's easy to go out there and look for somebody to get 15 sacks but that's just not the nature of the beast when you don't have a guy sitting next to you to be able to go out there and do it. But to be able to go out there and rush the passer as one I think is when we found out.

Q. So is it more so that they're doing it individually or is there some kind of scheme that you guys are doing?

RAHEEM MORRIS: I think it's a combination of those guys being able to rush as one, knowing where they're going to be, being able to execute the things that we want to get them to execute, whether it be games, whether it be straight rush, whether it be just rushing at the level of the quarterback, being able to rush with power, knowing the times you can and when you can't. I think they've done a great job of keeping guys in the pocket, keeping them in the framework of the play, whether it's been a three-man rush, whether it's been a four-man rush or whether it's been five or more.

Q. Coach, did you get an update on Drake London and his hamstring and would he have been able to go back in today?

RAHEEM MORRIS: I believe he would have went back in. I don't have any updates or anything like that. Came right to you guys, but I look forward to him being ready to practice next week.

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