

Seattle Seahawks Media Conference

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Seattle, Washington, USA

AJ Barner

Weekday Press Conference



AJ BARNER: Hello.

Q. Hello. Start putting (indiscernible) on your helmet now.

AJ BARNER: Might have to. Apparently already it had on there.

Q. First helmet catch?

AJ BARNER: Yeah, definitely would say so, yeah.

Q. Do you ever see the David Tyree catch?

AJ BARNER: Yeah, of course. Probably would've been like, what, 2008? Yeah. So definitely have seen it before. Probably was like six years old. Nice little rendition of that.

Q. Where does that rank in your catches you've had?

AJ BARNER: Definitely near the top. I would say I had another against at Indiana when I was at Ohio State that was kind of similar, but it was a good catch for sure.

Q. What's this whole year been like for you?

AJ BARNER: Just trying to learn every single week. Some games better than others for myself. I feel like this past week, like had I not had that touchdown, I might not be sitting here saying I played a great game.

Yeah, every week trying to learn from the guys in my room, my coach, and just get better and better.

Q. I saw your TV interview.

AJ BARNER: Yeah.

Q. Seemed like you were hard on your blocking.

AJ BARNER: Yeah, I just feel like we need to run the ball better, and I think myself and I think the tight ends would

probably say the same thing. We can do a better job.

I think myself, I thought Noah played really well in the run and pass game. I thought Pharoah did as well. I think I can continue to step up. At the end of the day I just want to win personally, so didn't get the job done this weekend.

Thursday night, you know, it's up as I would say.
(Laughing.)

Q. You had some good yards after catch. How much pride do you take in that side of your game, that once you get the ball in your hands you're tough to bring down?

AJ BARNER: Yeah, apparently coming out of the draft I was just a blocking tight end. I think I've broke that narrative so far.

Yeah, that's something I feel like when a tight end gets the ball in his hands you got to be able to make something shake with it after the catch.

I need to continue to do a good job of doing that.

Q. Do you feel like people mislabeled you at that?

AJ BARNER: Yeah.

Q. Or misunderstood your game?

AJ BARNER: I think mislabeled and kind of continue to do so. I'm far from where I can be as a tight end and where I want to go. I think a lot of times I have kind of flown under the radar and still continue to do so, and that continues to fuel me.

People said things about my production in college and what I can be in the NFL, and I think there is plenty left for me to do. But I have done a good job showing I can be a complete tight end in this league.

Q. Did you get a sense that the Seahawks saw something that maybe some other teams...

AJ BARNER: For sure. I think by them drafting me that told me enough, just that belief that they have in me. Then it's just on you as a player to go out there and take

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advantage of those opportunities and earn more for yourself and earn the trust of the quarterback and the playcaller and your position coach.

Q. Geno said just a little bit ago that you were asking a lot about routes early on in training camp and he kind of was like, hold on a second.

AJ BARNER: Yeah.

Q. Then you kind of earned his respect over time.

AJ BARNER: Yeah.

Q. Do you remember that?

AJ BARNER: Yeah, I think personally, I'm a curious person and love football and want to be able to get better, and to be able to ask a guy like him that and, you know, know that he's been in the league for a long time, that's your quarterback, like you want to be on the same page.

So I think you got to earn that trust over time and just continue to do so. You know, making plays for your quarterback, you should get more opportunities, so...

Q. Why do you think that was the book on you coming out of college?

AJ BARNER: I think just because of the production piece. You know, I was at Indiana, and in their eyes I felt like they know I could have been the best tight end, a really good tight end to play there.

Then I went to Michigan. Maybe didn't have as many opportunities in the pass game. If you look at numbers or maybe somebody that just watches football on the TV and doesn't really know the intricate details about a route they might put that label on me.

So I think it still is kind of there low-key and still something that I'm continuing to break, but just want to do a good job getting open.

We kind of touched on I felt like I can do a better job in the run game because that's been my MO. But like I said, I want to be able to do both.

Q. Geno mentioned that Kenny McIntosh might get more reps this week. We don't really know what's going on at running back.

AJ BARNER: Uh-huh.

Q. Does your blocking style change for the running

back? I'm thinking about the way that Kenny finishes plays.

AJ BARNER: I don't think so. It shouldn't. I think Kenny will do a great job when we need him to step yeah, as well as Zach or Ken Walker, really any of the running backs.

I think the biggest thing is just like the scheme and knowing who my assignment is, especially on a short week. Like there is not as much time to prepare.

So I don't think it changes whoever is carrying the rock. It's kind of just a trust that like they're going to -- whatever they see, they're going to hit the hole and I got to do my job and make sure my guy doesn't make the play.

Q. I remember after the draft we asked about Michael Penix.

AJ BARNER: Yeah.

Q. Cool to see him getting to start?

AJ BARNER: Yeah, of course. Glad that he's getting the opportunity to start. I saw they won and, you know, just like you guys and the people in Washington, I feel like we all expect great things of Mike. I'm sure he's going to do a great job there.

Q. With the blocking is there an adjustment to the NFL that you're...

AJ BARNER: Yes. I think the biggest adjustment for me is like I started some games this year and you go from playing 25, 30 snaps a game on offense to 70-plus snaps on offense and being able to play down in and down out and with that effort and with that technique, you know, that's a big step as a young player. Especially a tight end. Like this is a position where you have to be able to run-block against the highest paid dudes in the NFL, and run routes against linebackers, DBs, and do all the things.

Q. Seems like sometimes when you guys are near the sideline, you look at the sideline, look at the players you can hit, and you choose to hit the players.

AJ BARNER: Yeah, got to.

Q. Is that what's going through your head?

AJ BARNER: That's just something that the tight end room, we talk about. Our coach stresses on it, Coach Mack and Pharoah and Noah and Brady and Tyler, we as you say stay off the ticks.

So that just means stay off the tick marks on the sideline. Once you get close over there you as much room to work with. So just trying to stay off the ticks and make at least one guy miss on every play and finish runs falling forward.

Q. One guy that did believe in you as a pass catcher was your quarterback in college. Have you had a chance to check in with him?

AJ BARNER: JJ?

Q. Yeah.

AJ BARNER: Yeah, I called him right after the game and told him we let him off the hook. Yeah, I'm stoked for JJ. I know he's rehabbing super hard. I know he'll be back better than ever and I feel like his greatest quality is him as a competitor. Once he gets this opportunity, he just loves to compete, and I'm sure he'll do a great job there in Minnesota.

Q. What's the most effective message that Macdonald gives?

AJ BARNER: I think just his philosophy of just staying the course, stacking wins. You know, he's been able to -- it's his first year obviously as a head coach, but just continuing to keep the message the same thing; just understand the style that we want to play, the style that he wants, and I think I'm a guy that fits that.

We have plenty of guys on our team that can do that. I feel like he's done a really good job.

Q. Does he remind you of any coach you've had?

AJ BARNER: Honestly, not really. And I feel like these just because I'm new to the NFL, and I feel like the style is a little different as an NFL coach. He has his own style of doing things. Obviously a tremendous football mind. I think he's done a really good job of getting the locker room together and, you know, as kind of like when I first got here, you know, everyone is just kind of learning and acclimating to new things.

I feel like he's kind of taken the reins at this point obviously as the head coach; you know it's his building, so...

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