

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Coach Teryl Austin

Weekday Press Conference



That's really the biggest thing as a coach we want to try to make sure our guys get in the right spot to have an impact on the game. And that's really what we have to do.

Q. Interesting facing -- you haven't faced Lamar that many times despite being in the division and how long you've both been around. What are you seeing this season, same Lamar, different Lamar, a new offense?

COACH AUSTIN: Looks outstanding, looks like he has good command of what they're trying to do. Still obviously dangerous with his legs but he's throwing the ball well. They're spreading it out a little bit more for him. And I think he's doing a heck of a job. We all know what a great player he is and he looks like that this early in the season.

Q. Obviously like you said he can do both. We know Minkah is a guy can do both from his side. Is it like a chess match when you get him in a game against a quarterback like Lamar two of the top at what they do in this league?

COACH AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that's always the challenge when you run across great players. How do you handle them? How do you contain them? Because most of the time you're not really going to stop them, but you'll have an opportunity to contain them. And you can't let them control the narrative of the game.

That's our challenge. It's not just Minkah. It's going to be all of us on defense. We gotta do a great job of keeping him in the pocket when he's throwing. And when they have the runs and when he's throwing the ball we have to make sure we get him down because he's a hard tackle.

Q. With Minkah specifically how do you walk that line of using him in deep center field where teams can't avoid him too much out there, but also trying to get him around the ball and using him as a matchup guy on certain players?

COACH AUSTIN: That's always the thing. I'm not sure I can tell you how we would use him, but we're going to try to, obviously, hopefully, get him in the right place so he can make the impact on the game.

Q. Is it Joey Porter Jr. time yet?

COACH AUSTIN: Not yet. He's working hard. I like the way he's working he's making strides. Is he ready for a full-time right now? I'm not sure I can say that I really feel great about that, yes, but he's working in the right direction. He's trending in the right direction. And at some point we expect him to be out there.

Q. Is it like menu of stuff he can handle, first down versus third downs?

COACH AUSTIN: I think it is. It's always different to come into the league as you're starting to learn it and all of a sudden just throw you and thrust you into the starting lineup. That's a different animal.

So I want to be pretty sure that he's ready to handle all that because I don't want to throw him in there and him not have the success that we all envision for him.

Q. You and everybody else here (indiscernible) talk about the D line depth in camp and preseason. Now you're down, I don't know (indiscernible) status, maybe down two of them at least. Is that going to play out? Do you feel good about that?

COACH AUSTIN: I feel good about our guys up front. I like our guys up front. They play hard. They're big. They're physical.

This will test our depth, obviously, because we know they're a good offensive line. They have a really good scheme. And it will test us, but I feel comfortable with our guys.

Q. If you (indiscernible) focus ahead gets ahead, (indiscernible) team probably the best?

COACH AUSTIN: Yeah, we draw up Fehokos (phonetic) for teams like this.

Q. Desmond King is (indiscernible) with Chandon on the depth chart. Is Desmond getting ready to play? Where do you see his availability and readiness?

COACH AUSTIN: I think he's getting more comfortable in our system. I think that line on the depth chart represents the fact that he's had some growth here with us and learning our system. And he's probably ready to go.

What his role will be on Sunday -- could be small, could be large. It all depends on what happens in a game, how the game unfolds.

Q. Same thing with Keanu. What have you seen with Keanu? And is he ready to, I guess, take on a bigger role? And the "more" thing, if he gets more snaps does he have the gas tank to do it?

COACH AUSTIN: I'll say this first and foremost he absolutely has the gas tank to do it. That was one of the more impressive things watching him on college tape as a 300-plus-pounder where he would play over 80 percent of the snaps, and he played hard and he ran hard the entire time.

So I don't worry about his conditioning. I think he's obviously grown as a young player, and he's gotten more snaps, and he's gotten better as he's gotten more snaps. I anticipate that's his role growing as well.

Q. Do you guys still have the Jackson rules?

COACH AUSTIN: What are the Jackson rules?

Q. You know pound the crap out of him?

COACH AUSTIN: You mean, try not to let them run?

Q. When he's doing the fake ball tricks?

COACH AUSTIN: I think that's everybody. I don't know if we're the only ones that have them. But I think the bottom line is we have to make sure that we try to get the ball out of his hands because when he has the ball in his hands he's too dynamic of a player. The more you can get it out of his hands the better we are.

Q. You had success against them relative to everybody else.

COACH AUSTIN: We have. And I think a lot of that is because we're familiar with the division and we know these guys and they know us. That's where the chess match comes in. If you just continue to do the same things all the time, I'm sure they'll coach it, they're a well-coached group,

they'll figure out what we're doing. There's going to be some changes, some mix-ups, some different things we have to do to try to keep them off balance.

Q. Are you guys preparing for Odell to play and feel like I'm trying not to -- still have (inaudible)?

COACH AUSTIN: Yes, he's coming back off a pretty significant injury. Then he had some setback after the first or second game. So I think he's still kind of rounding back into shape, but you can see where he is a really good player. He still tries to get down the field. Runs good routes. Tough as crap. He has all the things that allows him to be an outstanding receiver.

To me, I'm sure it's just a matter of how well he is physically. But if he's well physically, he's still the same type of guy.

Q. You faced a rookie receiver last week in Tank Dell and another in Zay Flowers coming up this week. Seeing any trends coming up with these new wide receivers being drafted in recent years, do they play some more styles that maybe translating from this era of college football?

COACH AUSTIN: They do. These guys are kind of -- they're almost receivers/running backs. They put them in the backfield, run jet sweeps with them. They throw screens to them and routes down the field. They run short routes, underneath routes and run deep routes. That's the one thing I've seen with these guys. And they don't necessarily have to be big guys, but they're able to do a lot of different things. That's kind of what you see with the guys that are coming out now.

Q. Were you surprised your group didn't dominate Sunday?

COACH AUSTIN: I was surprised that we didn't play well, and that really ultimately comes back on me as a coordinator, that I have to get my guys ready to play. And so when they don't play the way they're capable of playing, and first thing I do is I look at what I'm doing, what I'm working on, what we're doing during the course of the week and how do we fix it and make it better for this week.

Q. Mike Tomlin talked about physicality. I'm assuming on both sides of the ball. Is that an emphasis this week as schematics?

COACH AUSTIN: Absolutely. The one thing, you have to have pads on to practice to get body -- to get used to hitting, to get used to taking on double teams and getting off of blocks. There's a lot of things that go into it. And for

the last two weeks, on a Wednesday, we kind of missed that. It was good to get back with our pads on yesterday, and I think our guys felt the urgency of the situation.

Q. How can Nick Herbig get more involved this coming week against the Raiders?

COACH AUSTIN: I think it's all a matter of the game. I think one of the things that would help is if we could get him behind the chains and we have an opportunity to rush 'em, because that's really his strong suit.

But until then, we'll just let the game come to him and we'll get him what we can and grow him as best we can with the amount of reps. But the bottom line is we have two really, really good outside linebackers, and we have to keep those guys on the field as much as possible.

Q. How receptive has Joey been to the whole process to him, seems he's gradually working up to a larger snap count, how receptive has he been to that process?

COACH AUSTIN: I think he knows it's a process. He's working through it. He's been nothing but receptive. He comes in, works, comes in early for meetings, does all the things that you want a young guy to do to try to get themselves, to elevate themselves to work to a starter position. It's just a matter -- going to be a matter of time.

Q. Top receivers this year have gassed you guys at times. Nico Collins another big game. Davante another big game, (inaudible) big game. What do you guys need to do better to start eliminating those guys or at least downplaying those?

COACH AUSTIN: We have to. You're right. We have to do a better job when we see these guys and identify these guys and we know what they're capable of. We've got to do a better job of stopping them. And again, we've got to do, scheme-wise we've got to do a better job. That's obviously me. And player-wise we have to do a better job recognizing where this guy is so we don't let them wreck the game. You're right, we've had three receivers have outstanding games against us. We have to do a better job.

Q. You might have to use, rely on Keanu a little more up front. What have you seen from him as he's had his first few games under his belt?

COACH AUSTIN: I like him. He's active. He's strong. He really competes well. And he does, he's just growing. I think he's really getting better as a player.

I think he's got a high ceiling, as Mike likes to call it. We'll

see where it goes. But I really like what he's been doing.

Q. When you went to study the Ravens, will they still have Lamar Jackson, still have a big physical line? Or is it a completely different team with a different offensive coordinator and it's (inaudible)?

COACH AUSTIN: It's obviously a new coordinator. So they're doing some things differently than they did last year. But the bottom line if you're going to play Baltimore, you know it's going to be a physical game. You know they're going to run the football. They've got the dynamic quarterback. They're going to take their shots with him.

And that's how you go into it. Forget who the coordinator is. Those players are those players; the team identity is the team identity.

Q. Texans (inaudible) in the run game down in the corners. You guys missed, I think, 15 tackles or something.

COACH AUSTIN: Are you trying to make my day bad? (Laughter).

Q. Just saying. How much of a focus is it for your perimeter guys?

COACH AUSTIN: Absolutely. The one thing with our team, and the one thing that we talked to everybody about is we're not going to have a good run defense if our small guys don't tackle and we don't play like that. And so we all have to be -- we're all in charge of the run game.

We don't just leave it up to the big guys and linebackers. It's everybody's got to be in charge and everybody's got a part in it. So those guys will work hard. They've been working hard and they know we have to do better. I've gotta do better.

But we've all gotta do better to stop the run game and stop the things hurting us, because if they continue to show up, then obviously I've got to make sure that we understand the situation and what's going on and put our guys in better positions to make plays.

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