

# Pittsburgh Steelers

## Media Conference

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

## Teryl Austin

Weekday Press Conference



**Q. Teryl, there are injuries every year. Why do you think you guys have been able to thrive even with so many guys out this year?**

TERYL AUSTIN: I think the mindset that Mike puts in from team development in terms of guys not knowing when their chance is going to come but being ready when it comes, and I think that shows up.

So I think guys, when they do get their opportunity, they're not on the side saying, hey, I'm never going to play. They do know, if they get their opportunity, if they do well at it, they'll have a chance at a great role.

So I think guys take that to heart in this building, and I think that's why we've been able to stay afloat.

**Q. When you get to the other side of it, do you feel like you have more from a guy like Keanu Benton and Trenton Thompson than you knew you had before you needed them because of injury?**

TERYL AUSTIN: Absolutely, because you don't know about those guys. I think the more they play, the more that we find out about them, and I think that's everybody. I think the more we like. I think they're both trending upwards, and we've just got to continue that path for them.

**Q. You're doing a lot of things well right now. You've climbed into the top five in scoring defense, but you're still allowing third and (indiscernible) completions for 20-plus yards. For you, what do you feel like the problem is for some of those big plays, and how do you start stopping those?**

TERYL AUSTIN: Last week we had a tipped ball that went for 30-plus. We had a scramble situation where we missed a sack and it ended up being a big play.

I think for us we have to try to not shoot ourselves in the foot and make the plays that we can. We're going to continue to work at that. That is a problem. I think that's

really the difference in us being a really lockdown defense and sometimes team gets out on us and us losing the field position battle.

We'll just keep grinding it out in practice trying to get better at it and trying to make sure we put our guys in positions to make those plays.

**Q. Mike Tomlin kind of brought up unsolicited what I called the big brother relationship Kazeo has with Porter. Have you experienced much of this? Those guys seem to get after each other pretty well, pretty regularly.**

TERYL AUSTIN: And they do. I think the way he does it, Kazeo does it is really good for Joey. Joey has kind of gravitated to him, and those guys have a really good working relationship. It is, it's really good. Kazeo kind of drags Joey along sometimes. As a young guy, you're not sure exactly what you're going to do.

You may have some (indiscernible) because his dad has been in the building, but it's a little different when you're in the building. I think Kazeo is really helping him along. They actually have kind of a neat relationship.

**Q. Do you hear them trade insults?**

TERYL AUSTIN: Absolutely. When you're in the DB room, you trade insults. That's how it works.

**Q. Any good ones?**

TERYL AUSTIN: There you go again. I'm not giving you anything that happens in there.

**Q. Especially for a rookie, does that make him feel inclusive almost?**

TERYL AUSTIN: Absolutely.

**Q. Like one of the guys, like I belong because they're killing me?**

TERYL AUSTIN: I think so. I think that's really the good thing about our group in totality. We have a group that



maybe just wants everybody to do well. They know they all can't be out there at the same time. They know they're all not going to play.

But they do know that, in the big scheme of things, that we want to win games. The way to win games is everybody's doing their best. They all help each other out in one way or another.

**Q. You hear every year about T.J. or whatever, so I don't know how to phrase a question, I guess, in terms of where his game is or whatever.**

TERYL AUSTIN: He's great. How's that? That's a great way to put it. The guy is an unbelievable football player. He just shows it week in and week out. It's just everybody wants to talk about the sacks, but just the effect he has on the game.

I think he's got three fumbles caused, three recover fumbles, an interception, stuff he does in the run game. It's not like he's one-dimensional. He is something else. People plan for that every week, but he still shows up every week in that stat sheet, and that's amazing.

**Q. T.J., Minkah, and Cam haven't played together since The Opener. What would it mean for this defense if you had all three of those guys back healthy for the stretch run?**

TERYL AUSTIN: I think it helps our defense when we have three quality players like that, and I think we've got to get those guys better and playing, and if we get them all together and we're playing well and we continue with an upward trajectory, I think we're going to like it.

Because I think we have outstanding players, and those guys are three at the best at their position in the league. If we have all three of them on the field together, we can only hope we play better.

**Q. 21 played for you. Was that a game plan thing, or was it more that 42 didn't practice much, or did he get himself into the rotation, I guess?**

TERYL AUSTIN: 21, we thought we could use him last week. I know he played two weeks before that. I think his situation will be when we feel we can use him. He's big, long, fast. So we kind of like that situation. We know J.P.'s going to be up, and J.P.'s given us some quality reps during the course of the year.

So it depends on kind of what we like scheme-wise whether he's up, what he does, and all those different things.

**Q. Has Thompson done enough where he can find a role when he comes back?**

TERYL AUSTIN: We'll see about that. I think he has. He's really -- I think the last two weeks, talk about a guy, for some people say come out of nowhere, but he was given his opportunity, and I think he thrived in that opportunity.

If he's a good football player and he can continue to help us, we need to find a place for him.

**Q. Do you remember him from camp?**

TERYL AUSTIN: Absolutely. I remember he got off the bus, he came in, and we had a full padded practice. I think the first play he made was on a slant. He made a really nice tackle coming on that, and our guys go, oh, that's all right. Who is this guy?

Then he just continued to show as camp went on, and it was good.

**Q. He talked about that really accelerating his confidence, just what he did out there.**

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, and it did, it showed. I think that what he did, we felt comfortable enough keeping him along as a practice squad guy that, if something would happen, we would feel comfortable bringing him up. I think it's shown that we made the right choice there.

**Q. I remember last week you talked about Blake Martinez and just the veteran presence of him being here, but after another week of him getting acclimated to everything, do you envision anything for him going forward, or what do you think the next step for him is?**

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, we'll continue to bring him along. We'll continue to see where he may fit with us. I'm assuming -- and I think that at some point he'll have a hat on and he'll have an opportunity to help us.

What that is right now or this week, I'm not sure.

**Q. What kind of progress did he make last week?**

TERYL AUSTIN: Like every practice, he's just learning our stuff and getting into the playbook and learning the things and how we do those things. He's a good pro. We can see that. It's just a matter of time before he's ready to hopefully contribute.

**Q. When you look at Arizona, how is the look and feel**

**of their offense different with Kyler Murray the last couple weeks?**

TERYL AUSTIN: You've got a guy that really can make all the throws, has unbelievable mobility. I know he's coming off a knee, but the guy has unbelievable mobility. He's got a couple of touchdown rushes already. You see him keep drives alive on third down. You see him avoid the rush and get rid of the ball. So he's a really versatile player.

I think those are the things we see with him coming back in their offense. I think it's probably opened up the playbook a little more for some of the downfield stuff they like to do.

Again, we're going to have to do a great job of keeping him in the pocket and trying to limit his scrambles and his ability to make big plays outside the pocket.

**Q. The run defense in that game last week, it seems like something like the Steelers, that's what you guys were able to do is get on the running back. They wanted to go with the quarterback and the running back and they didn't even try. Is that a possibility every week?**

TERYL AUSTIN: Absolutely. That's what we wanted to do when we started the season. I always talk about stopping the run, and we know how bad it hurt us earlier in the year when we weren't doing a great job of stopping the run and putting the brakes on teams, teams were having a lot of success.

So I think continuing, if we want to make a run at getting into the playoffs and doing all the things that we want to do as a team, we've got to be able to stop the run, especially in December.

**Q. Mike had said in years past, as a defensive coordinator, part of your job was being that guy in the booth when there's an instant replay situation. How tough is that job, and what are those moments like when there is a play and you're trying to figure out what really happened?**

TERYL AUSTIN: It's like anything. The job is not tough. What my job is when I was in that seat was to relay information to Mike, what I saw in terms of, hey, here's what happened on this play and do I think it's a challengeable play or not. Then Mike makes the decision after that.

That's really all it is, is you go through it, you go through the things, and some of those things, rules will apply in the game and this is a good challenge, this is not a challenge, and we move on. Sometimes we're right; sometimes we're

wrong.

**Q. Who's in that role now that you're the defensive coordinator?**

TERYL AUSTIN: Mike will address who's in what roles.

**Q. Now that James Conner is coming back into town, what kind of player has he developed into? Obviously he had success here.**

TERYL AUSTIN: When I watch him, he's still a lot of the same guy. He is a bruising runner. He will run through tackles. He gets to the second level. If he finds a little guy, the little guy had better watch out.

So I really like James. We know what kind of football guy he was when he was here. It will be -- it's going to be our guys are going to have their work cut out for us this week getting him on the ground and making sure the thing we talk about is we've got to get multiple hats to make sure we get him and wrap him.

You're not going to shoulder tackle him. You're not going to push him down. You'd better tackle, wrap, and have multiple people there.

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