

# Pittsburgh Steelers

## Media Conference

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

### Eddie Faulkner

Weekday Press Conference



**Q. A guy like Mitch coming in, obviously a lot of experience in the league, so it's not like you have some untested guy. What is it about Mitch that allows him to come off the bench and play the way at least he has in the past?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: Mitch prepares week in and week out like he's the starter. You feel perfectly fine with him going in there because he does everything he needs to to be duly prepared for the opponent we have.

From that standpoint, we don't have any anxiety about him going in there and being able to produce.

**Q. How did you handle the illegal formation stuff, the substitution issues that you had?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: In a short week like this, man, as a coach, the hard thing is you're walking the fine line between we've got to talk about those issues because they were issues, but at the same time, we have to move on to the next opponent.

So that was the first thing we addressed. We made sure that obviously everybody understood that it was unacceptable. We did that collectively as a unit. Then we've got to move on.

But they were definitely held accountable. Everybody was held accountable for any mistakes that they made in that game because that wasn't what we were hunting. Now we plot a plan forward to be better on Thursday night.

**Q. Red zone has been an issue all year. What are you guys working on this week, and what can you do to correct what hasn't worked yet?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: Absolutely. I know I keep on coming in here and saying it, but it's back to the details. It's like, okay, you reevaluate, what was it that we failed at? What did we not do well at? Where do we clean it up? How can we streamline our plan to make it easier for the guys if

that's what's necessary? What things do they do well? Continue to try to plot a plan forward to get them to execute better.

We would do that if we were great in the red zone. We'd do that if we're not. That's just going to be the way we've got to go about our business, and that's what we're working on presently.

**Q. Are there things that you guys can take as an offense from that scoring drive you had in the fourth quarter with Mitch that you can apply to this game in terms of the things that were working well to get maybe some red zone points out there?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: Sure. Part of the problem was at that point in the game we're down a little bit. They're sitting there in two high structures, and you're going to have check -- if you notice on that drive, a lot of it was checkdowns and things like that. Those things appear in those kinds of settings.

Yes, we could, but realistically in a tight game, in a competitive game, you're not going to have a lot of those Cover 2 look type situations. So you've still got to be able to execute against man or one high structure type defenses.

**Q. With Mitch stepping in here, do you imagine a similar look and feel from the offense, or will things evolve a little bit to highlight his skill set?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: I think it will be a similar feel. I don't anticipate not much is going to change. He'll go in and operate, and the expectation will be the same for him as it would be for 8.

**Q. Results have been pretty good for the New England defense. Doesn't seem like they have a unit that has a lot of star players that get a lot of attention. What do they do well?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: They do a lot schematically. On the back end, those two safeties, 23 and 5, are good players. Then they do a really good job of supporting them with other guys in the secondary.

So you'll see those guys in a variety of spots. They'll be back playing Cover 2. They could be in man on a back or tight end. They may be in the box. There's some similarities to Arizona and what they would do with Buddha Baker and Thompson.

Schematically, they do some things structurally where you have a lot of conversations in a short week. We've just got to make sure we're really clean in discussing those things. But those two safeties are really good, and their versatility allows them to be multiple and create some issues for you.

**Q. As far as running the ball too, it looks like they're pretty good against that. What kind of challenges are there?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: Same thing. You've got to understand where you're spotting, where those guys, if they're dropping into the box, where they're at. If they're not, the receivers understand and they've got to go dig them out.

Those two players now, you've got to have guys accountable for them and blocking them so you can go and execute or they're capable of wrecking a game.

**Q. How has Mitch evolved from what he was as a starter last season to kind of where he is now coming in to start this game?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: The one thing I've noticed about Mitch is he hasn't flinched at all. Like going back to last year, he comes in every day, has his hard hat on to go to work. That makes you feel good as a coach because you know he's preparing himself the proper way. I don't think anything's changed from when he's being a starter.

Like I said, he prepares every week as if he is starting.

**Q. Is he any more willing to take risks in the passing game?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: I don't know. I think he enjoys shot plays, you know what I'm saying? We're calling shots to take them. When you've got guys like 14 or 18 that can make plays down the field, down the grass for you, you want to take those shots.

I don't know, there is a personality there, you know what I mean, for him that's different than 8 just because they're different people. But from a game plan perspective, we're going to have the same approach.

**Q. We heard a lot from your players this week about**

**how they felt throughout the week, everyone took everything seriously and practice was aimed at that, and then there were just breakdowns on the field. How do you as a coach isolate those issues when preparation was what it was supposed to be but execution wasn't?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: I think you've got to draw parallels between them. A lot of the issues that came up in that game, we talked about and discussed, whether it was myself or Coach Tomlin, in front of the room. That gives you all the ability in the world to walk in there and be like, guys, look, we talked about this, and this didn't happen.

So what happens with that? The accountability now falls on the players to make sure they're executing and getting done what they need to get done. We'll just continue on that path but making sure that they understand they've got to have some more urgency with how to go about their business.

**Q. Do you think the players were loose with a 2-10 team coming in here?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: I don't think we were loose. The question was asked. We prepared the right way. We did everything the right way. We just didn't execute in the moment, and that's the message.

**Q. You mentioned accountability. Do you feel like the players are owning it?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: They're in there in that building owning it. Like I say, we have these conversations outwardly in front of everybody so there's nowhere to hide.

**Q. On fourth and one, what's the advantage of running a downhill guy like Najee versus the shotgun?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: It was just a downhill run we liked. You look at that clip, we've got everybody covered up, we've got to get a yard down there. Everybody's covered up, we've got to get a yard.

**Q. I don't know if it's high on your priority list, but Mason is now a snap away. He hasn't taken a meaningful snap in two years. How do you get him ready?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: Now he's been thrust into a position -- I will say this about Mason. Mason, as the 3, he's been preparing as if he's the starter. You feel fine about that.

I've been here with Mason -- for the five years I've been here, the '19 season he had to start the majority of the year

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for us. He's got a lot of starts under his belt. Hopefully we don't get in a situation where he has to do that. But if he had to go in and play, you feel really good about a guy who's got experience under center in NFL games in the regular season playing for you.

**Q. You guys are 4-0 after losses this year. What is it about this team that has made you guys resilient and able to bounce back after losses?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: Mike Tomlin, great leader. He gets guys refocused and about their business. Everybody falls in line with that.

**Q. How much easier is it to refocus on a short week like this?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: I will say that you appreciate the short week in the sense that you get that bad taste out of your mouth quicker and you're not waiting until Sunday. From that light, it's a little bit easier. There are challenges obviously going all the way back to last week and getting prepared for this game on a short week, making sure you're detailing your work the way you want.

**Q. To follow up on Will's question about Mitch when he comes in. Seven picks since he's been here in relief. Do you think that's a game strip thing? When he gets into those games, is he more aggressive as a backup filling in? What do you make of that?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: I don't know. That's an interesting point. I don't think much about it other than in this game this week, he has a week to prepare. That's just going to be our -- we're just going to feel good about it, and he's going to go out there and do great.

**Q. How much do you guys look at the Panthers game last year when he came in and started, in terms of game plan? What worked well in that game when you're planning for this one?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: Not too much. There's not too many similarities schematically between the two teams, but knowing what Mitch is capable of doing, you feel totally fine about him going in there and being able to play well.

**Q. When you're in a situation where you lose a starting quarterback, you're a running backs coach by trade, it seems the running backs might be a portion of the formula here. How much will you guys need to lean on Jaylen and Najee to get through this stretch?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: I just think as a general rule that's kind of what our identity started to become. We run the

ball well. We feel like we can run the ball when we have to, as Coach Tomlin likes to refer to a lot. So we're going to lean on those guys regardless of who's on center.

But when you have a run game you can lean on, you feel like, if it's a backup situation, whoever the quarterback is that's playing, you can support that individual with the run game.

**Q. How much of an adjustment was there Sunday, once Seumalo went down, to the run game? How could that apply here on Thursday with his status up in the air?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: Not much change. As far as the plays we were calling, we've got faith in 71 going in there and executing. Not much changed once he came out of the game.

**Q. Mason Cole had trouble with the shotgun snaps. That's different than a lineman thing where it's a mental error. How do you work through a player who's been very consistent that has a problem like that?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: You just said it. He's been very consistent. We're not going to make too big of a deal about it other than pointing it out because it was huge in the game. He's a professional. He's going to go about his business the right way. We're going to have faith in him doing that.

**Q. Belichick is known as one of the best game planners maybe ever in this league. What's it like for you to put together a plan this week against him and, and do you think about that at all when you're in this chair right now?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: No, I don't think about it. Obviously respect Coach Belichick, what an unbelievable career, but from the standpoint of quivering over the fact that he's over there, no. We're just going to prepare for him the way we do everybody else.

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