

# Pittsburgh Steelers

## Media Conference

Wednesday, December 13, 2023  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

## Teryl Austin

Weekday Press Conference



TERYL AUSTIN: How we doing, guys?

**Q. Good. How is it going for you?**

TERYL AUSTIN: I've had better weeks, that's for sure.

**Q. (Question about outside linebackers.)**

TERYL AUSTIN: I'm hoping to. We'll see. Right now they're able to do some things in practice, so we'll see leading up to Saturday.

I'm hopeful.

**Q. If they were not as available as much as you like, how has (indiscernible) larger role?**

TERYL AUSTIN: I believe so. I think he had to take on a pretty large role last week in addition to his special teams duties. I thought he did a good job in that regard.

What we do, we have him, we know we should have M.G. at the end of this week. I think that will give us some depth there. I think that's one area where we improved our depth last year and I think that will help us if we do end up with some injuries or some lack of availability with Alex or T.J.

**Q. Connor and Elliott... When you look at that tape, what is the biggest deficiency in stopping the run?**

TERYL AUSTIN: Well, I think, I mean, I wouldn't -- I thought Zeek, I'm not saying he had a great running game. I thought he was more effective in the passing game, doing some things like that.

Like anything, we got to play better, fit better, do a lot of things, just continue to improve. There's always areas to get better, but I'm not fretting and thinking like it's a wholesale change that we're terrible. We just got to do some things a little bit better, a little bit more sound, a little bit more detailed and I think we'll be fine.

**Q. Markus, was that a numbers things not playing special teams?**

TERYL AUSTIN: I think that's really what it came down to. This time of year we have a lot of injuries, you have some guys down. So sometimes those couple of last spots guys are going to get up because we they help us in special teams. That's really a lot of times what the considerations are.

But I don't see it as a long-term thing. I really like M.G., and he's a good football player.

**Q. At inside linebacker, do you imagine a similar rotation?**

TERYL AUSTIN: I think we'll continue to try to use guys and do some things that they're better at so that will probably involve some rotation and some different roles for guys.

But we'll just continue to evaluate and evolve and try to get guys in the best position possible so we can play better.

**Q. Is there an area that Mark Robinson needs to continue to grow? He's part of that rotation, but to get a little bit more reps, take another step forward?**

TERYL AUSTIN: He knows what he has to do. He's been working in that regard. He's earning the trust here in terms of being out on the field. I think he's doing the things he has to do.

I don't think there's anything, one specific thing, he has to do. He's doing the things to earn the trust of his teammates and us that we can put him on the field and we feel good and confident about what he's doing. That's why he got some play last week.

**Q. Martinez only playing in the base, is that more about the matchups or kind of like here is a new guy, let's give him one thing and see how it goes?**

TERYL AUSTIN: I think because we do have some turnover in that room, I think it was prudent for us to try to limit the packages they were in because it helps their

learning, it helps what they're studying, things that they're doing as they get ready for the game. They don't have to absorb the entire game plan, just their specific parts of it.

I think that's part of the thing now that because we have those new guys, that's part of what we're trying to do, give them things they can do, hone in on, things that they can get good at during the course of the week. We go there from there on game day.

**Q. If both your outside linebackers get cleared, do you give them as heavy a workload...**

TERYL AUSTIN: That's on them. If they feel like they can do it, I'm not taking them off (laughter). If they feel like they can do it, they're playing hard for us like they always do, then they're out there.

**Q. Do you ask them after every series how they're feeling?**

TERYL AUSTIN: No, no. I stay away from that (laughter).

**Q. Is the gap between what an offense can do between maybe the number 11 guy in the league and the 60th guy in the league narrower than it used to be in terms of ability?**

TERYL AUSTIN: I think the quarterback situation, you have your starter, you have your guy. Unless you have a really special guy, your backup really is not far off. I think that's what you see. I mean, obviously the culture starting a rookie guy who has a lot of talent, he got injured, and you got a guy that steps in that has starting experience, and it shows. I think that goes on around the league.

I do think that the gap is closing, and sometimes you don't feel as down or as bad when you have to go to your backup quarterback as maybe at one point some people did.

I think when you look at the league in terms of it's not all five-, seven-step dropback, there's a lot of play-action, you protect the quarterback, be very accurate, get the ball out of his hands, the offense can keep moving.

I think there's a lot of different things. It's a talent issue. I think it's also a scheme issue. I think offensive guys are doing a really good job. If and when the quarterbacks do get hurt, there's not a big dropoff.

**Q. How different is the job you're asking Kazeo doing when Minkah is in the game versus when he's not?**

TERYL AUSTIN: I don't think what we ask Kazeo to do,

we've been pretty solid in terms of what we ask him to do and the roles that he's in. It doesn't change much when Minkah is in. It changes for the other guys that come in. Like when Minkah was down, the other guys came down, Kazeo's role doesn't change.

I think last week we just missed some plays, to be quite honest with you. We just missed some plays. I have confidence that those guys will make those plays more often than not.

**Q. (Question regarding Pittman.)**

TERYL AUSTIN: Everybody is going to use tight ends. If we show that we can't guard 'em, they're going to use 'em, even if they haven't. We've got to do a better job there. We have to do a better job in terms of making sure we have the right guys on them, what scheme we're doing. When we choose to maybe leave it, it's got to be at the right times. There's lots of variables that go into it. I would think they're going to use a tight end till we show 'em we can stop him.

Pittman is their guy. I think No. 1 Downs is a young guy who is really moving the chains, doing some things. They have a couple guys when 14 is down the field... They have a couple guys they can get the ball to, which leaves some one-on-one coverage at the tight end. We're going to have to hold up somehow this week.

**Q. In terms of Moss and Taylor, how similar is he as running back, how much does the scheme change when one is in there versus the other?**

TERYL AUSTIN: In terms of running the ball, I think they're both really good downhill runners. They see the holes they're supposed to get to and they get to them.

The biggest difference is Taylor has the ability to really hit the home run. You see Moss hit some home runs as well. I think Taylor has a little bit overall more speed. They're both fine running backs. Moss runs behind his pads. You watch him many times, he didn't go down, they just blow the whistle. He's a hard guy to tackle.

Both really quality, quality running backs. We've got to make sure if we're going to have a chance this game, we've got to wrap these guys up, get them on the ground. We can't let them fall forward.

**Q. Because scoring has been difficult for the offense, the defense has been successful most of the year, can that create a cumulative effort in terms of mental strain on guys where they feel they have to be perfect because there's just not a lot of wiggle room?**



TERYL AUSTIN: That's our job. Our job is to stop the other team from scoring. It doesn't matter what happens on the other side of the ball, our job is to stop them. That's a variable we can't control. The only variable we control is how well we stop the other team. If we don't do a good job of it, that's our fault. If we lose by a point, no matter what the score is, it's our fault because they allowed their offense to score one more than us.

**Q. Defending tight ends, is there a balance with a guy like Minkah between putting him in the box, putting him in a situation where he's over a tight end, versus giving him an opportunity to play a play?**

TERYL AUSTIN: They're always a balance because I think we all know he's a premier centerfielder. The things he does in the back, puts a little pause in terms of QBs throwing the ball down the field. There is a balance. We have to make sure we strike the right balance. That's always easier said than done.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports