

# Pittsburgh Steelers

## Media Conference

Wednesday, December 20, 2023  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

## Eddie Faulkner

Weekday Press Conference



**Q. What does inserting Mason, what does that change for the offense or how can it change or provide a spark?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: You know, Mason has a confidence about him. We feel good about inserting him in. Mason works like a pro. Always has. From that standpoint, we feel confident putting him in there and going execute.

I was here with him in '19 when he was really kind of the starter for the season and did some good things, so I kind of have that background and some comfort there. I expect him to go in and execute.

**Q. Is there anything he can bring that the other guys can't or something you can latch onto?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: They all have their strong suits in different things about them. I know when Mitch was in there we had that same conversation. Mason is no different. As far as from an execution standpoint, he's in all the same meetings. Sully does a great job getting with those guys and seeing what plays they like and what things they may do better than the other guy does.

So those will be the only tweaks. More like tailoring the offense to throws and concepts that he feels comfortable with.

**Q. I know you guys don't change for the sake of change, but can that be a catalyst? You and Sully provided a boost in your new roles and Mason just provided a boost by being a different face.**

EDDIE FAULKNER: Sure, that's what we're hoping for, sure, that he comes in and can give a spark for us.

**Q. There has been a lot of backup quarterbacks that have started games or come in relieved that have had success in the league this year. I think you guys have lost every game where a backup has had to come in. Is there something you guys aren't able to get or that's**

**holding this offense back from having success with a backup the way other teams are able to?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: That's a hard question to ask because the only locker room or meeting rooms I'm in is for the Steelers, so I can't speak on any other places. I know in my case, whether it's Kenny or the backups, we're trying to tailor and cater to them in what they do well in the offense, try to get them going that way.

**Q. George said yesterday that he didn't want to block for Jalen in the end zone because he didn't want to get injured. Also a video out there when Mitch through the second (indiscernible.) He ran in the opposite direction. What is your reaction to that? How do you handle that with a player who is making those decisions?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: The first part of the question is my reaction is we have to go out there and execute every play to the highest level. Every player. That's the expectation.

Second part of that would be how do you handle that is you address it. You present it to the group. You make sure that it's called out amongst the guys and they understand your stance and move on from that.

Being here with George every day, I know he's a guy that loves it, he loves ball. Works at it. He wants to be good. That's where you find your piece, knowing that you can bring him along in that regard because he loves ball. That's the approach.

**Q. I was going to say, has that been addressed, brought up, privately or among the other guys?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: Yes, sir.

**Q. When you say he loves ball, has he responded well to this, is good with the overall situation?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: I think he's a young guy that's got to continue to learn how to be a professional.

**Q. When this becomes a talking point every week, does it feel like the message is getting through to him?**



EDDIE FAULKNER: You keep on hammering away at it. That's our job. That's what we'll do.

**Q. Any consideration to sitting him down for playing time discipline at this point?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: We're going to coach the guys the best ability out there. That's probably closer to a Coach Tomlin question, anything like that.

**Q. How do you coach something like effort?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: You make it known that it's not acceptable and then expect it to change.

**Q. Do you have to change your approach in making it known that it's not acceptable, if it's a similar message or similar approach that hasn't worked?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: I'm the type of person that I'm going to stay steady with the message and not switch that part of it up. Just continue to make it real clear and bring those guys along.

**Q. Was there anything happening in the Bengals game that you haven't been able to replicate since then in terms of the offense, kind of separate...**

EDDIE FAULKNER: You know, I think they have been separate in the sense of our problems in a couple of the last few games have been penalties and shooting ourselves in the foot.

Although we had -- I think we had a couple in that Cincinnati game the first time we played them, that wasn't the overriding factor. So we weren't shooting ourselves in the foot and stalling out drives because of silly things we were doing.

Coach made a reference earlier in the week to September things and December, and those are the things we can't have. So to answer your question, I think we were just playing a lot cleaner football from a fundamental standpoint.

Not just the fundamentals of the game and how to block or run or what have you, but also the fundamentals of understanding how the game has to be played for you to be successful.

**Q. What's Kenny's prognosis?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: That would be a Coach Tomlin question.

**Q. The one thing Colin said about Mason was calculated risk taker. Do you agree with that? Is that a reference to he's willing to take risk or a reference to he's willing to take the right risk?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: Sure, I agree with that. He's very confident in his ability and his ability to make throws, so I think he'll do that.

**Q. What's Mason been like as a leader this season during all the transition? Is it hard to lead from the back when you're a three?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: That's what I was going to say, when you're a three the best leadership you can provide is what people see when they look about how you go about your business. He's been an awesome pro from that standpoint.

**Q. A lot of teams have had a lot of success with backup quarterbacks this year. Do you feel like that's -- obviously he's not the same player as Kenny, but do you feel like as an offense you could have done more around him to give him success.**

EDDIE FAULKNER: Around Mitch?

**Q. Yeah, is last three games.**

EDDIE FAULKNER: Yeah, we're owning all of it. The coaches could have done better, players could've played better. We're owning all of it. The simple answer would be yes.

**Q. How do you go about changing that?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: You continue to chop away at the details, the things I talk to you guys about every week. We try to detail it down more and analyze what went wrong that week, what maybe we could have done better that week, what things we need to bring to the attention of the players, that they could have done better, and hope you get a better result.

**Q. George, do you get the feeling he's receptive, is willing to put the effort in?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: Yes.

**Q. Najee had a fumble and looked like a run where he missed a big hole. Bad day at the office for him or something he needs to do to get better?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: Bad day at the office. He needs to

play better. We've had that discussion.

**Q. Is there something the last couple games you've seen consistently go wrong with the running game?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: We just been making a huge emphasis this in week on finish, finishing our play, finishing blocks, strain, competing. You know, that's been the main thing.

Just a better finish overall I think could be provided from everybody on offense. Anybody involved that's out there on the grass has to strain better.

**Q. Could it be the thing where he's No. 2, or is it the kind of thing where he starts or he's not dressing?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: Again, I think that's probably a Coach T question.

**Q. What have you seen from him in the couple days he had of practice?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: GP?

**Q. Kenny.**

EDDIE FAULKNER: I mean, obviously the medical staff is way farther along in understanding where he is with it. We've seen him do some good things, so leave it in their hands.

**Q. With Mason you mentioned you've been here since 2019. How have you seen him grow mentally through kind of the roller coaster of a career he's had here? How does that prepare him to make the start this week?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: The simple fact that he's still here. That speaks to his resilience and focus and being a pro.

**Q. What is the trick to finding the happy medium between protecting the ball and taking shots, and how much of a struggle has this been in this year?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: Happy medium between protecting the ball and taking shots? I mean, shots are just that, you want to take good shots. We as coaches got to scheme, whether it's play-action or drop-back passes, we got to do a good job scheming shots we think will be there, for one, to help them.

And then two, it's like we got to go out and trust that our guys are going to make those catches on 50/50 balls down the field and stuff like that.

From that standpoint, there is a thin line. We don't ever waiver off the ball security standpoint. We expect 100% ball security, interceptions, fumble, what have you. That's the expectation, the standard.

**Q. Mason said he's been smiling a lot more this week and just feels I think maybe relief. I don't know. Have you seen maybe a slight change in his demeanor? Do you notice more pep in his step?**

EDDIE FAULKNER: For sure. He's excited about his opportunity, and why wouldn't he be? It's a big game and he can really make his point about some things. It's an opportunity for him to put himself in good standing moving forward.

So I like Mason's demeanor right now.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports /#