

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

Thursday, December 28, 2023

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Teryl Austin

Weekday Press Conference



Q. Mike said on Tuesday, having that full week with the two new safeties really kind of helped you, instead of losing those guys in the game, what did you think of how Pat and those guys did back there?

TERYL AUSTIN: I thought they did a good job. And he's right, a week of practice is always going to help these guys, and I thought they did a really good job of adjusting, and obviously Eric had been sitting for a while and then Pat playing a new position. Those guys did a really good job in terms of communication, tackling, getting in the right spots. I was really happy with them and happy for them. The.

Q. A little like Zach --

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, he was.

Q. Told us, he's playing pick-up basketball?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, he thinks he's really good but he's not. That's why he's here.

Q. Can you give us the context of what he did and maybe what you expect?

TERYL AUSTIN: Well, we went into it with different plans and then he went down. And so he had to play more snaps than we thought he would. Again, we've got a real good familiarity with Myles. He started a lot of games for us last year. So I know what he's about and the type of football player he is. It's just a matter of, you know, just lack of reps and practice time for him. But he did well. There's some things obviously he could work on but we expect him to be better this week now that he had a week of game reps under his belt than he was last week.

Q. Obviously your focus is on the defensive tackles but when it comes to Mason, he's going up against a pretty talented defense full of Pro Bowlers, and you guys are throwing a variety of looks at him. What stood out about the way they responded to some of that and how he's grown through some of the

experience?

TERYL AUSTIN: I mean, Mason is a pro. I think all those things were answered by Mike when he talked about how he prepared. I think Mason probably answered it in the way he prepared and goes about business. I don't have much to add to that.

Q. What do you see on the tape on Smith?

TERYL AUSTIN: I see a guy, veteran guy, knows this league and knows coverages and is going to get the ball to the guys who need to get the ball at the right time. He really takes care of the ball. When you watch him, there's maybe one turnover with him in the games that we've got on tape but he really takes care of the ball. He gets the ball down the field. He's a deep thrower and he's got arm talent. He's a veteran guy that maybe was written off at one point in his career but just has obviously -- that tells you he's got tremendous mental toughness, in addition -- we know he's got talent but he's got tremendous mental toughness and the way he goes about the game is admirable and like watching him.

Q. Do you remember seeing him back then, and is it a different guy?

TERYL AUSTIN: That's a lot of games. I don't know if I -- I do. But you can tell. He's obviously playing well and that's really the biggest thing. He's playing well and he does a good job for them and I think that's the most important thing.

Q. The three receivers he's throwing to, how do you expect them to attack you guys?

TERYL AUSTIN: I mean, over in the middle is kind of our Achilles' heel right now. I think they would probably try to get all those guys in there at some point. It's our job to defend it. We have to do a better job. I've got to help our guys get in better positions.

But I think they are all capable of going over the middle and making some hay down there. They have got three quality guys. They have got a quality tight end. You can't forget about Fant coming across the middle and working

there. He's like a fourth receiver for them.

So we have our work cut out for us. I don't think it's going to be one particular guy. I think they will be able to probably scheme and try to get multiple guys to try to get in that area.

Q. You brought Mike Walker and Blake in, getting them acclimated to the playbook. Was there less of that acclimation with Miles? Was it more about the physical side and getting him ready for game reps?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think for Miles it was more physical getting back into football shape. He knows our playbook. Obviously we have some changes every year but the core stuff that we do is going to remain pretty steady.

Q. Could Miles get the dot on Sunday?

TERYL AUSTIN: He had it last week.

Q. How quickly do you hope that Jaylen Smith can adapt and learn and grow and get himself --

TERYL AUSTIN: You know, we'll see. Like we brought the other veterans in, I think the biggest thing is trying to get him up to speed as fast as possible. I don't know much about how he is in the classroom and that kind of thing. I bet he's pretty good. You don't become an All-Pro and play some good football in this league for a lot of years and not know what to do.

I think it's going to be a matter of time and he seems to be picking up things, the little bit we've given him in a day, he's picked that up okay. You know how it is, you get to a matter of game planning and the amount of stuff that you have in and the details of it, that's where we have to see where he stacks up.

Q. Sam Sullivan played a lot and the Bengals have a pretty good slot in Tyler Boyd. What was he able to do that made him successful last week and can that carry over?

TERYL AUSTIN: Absolutely. I thought he did a really good job. They do a lot of stuff with RPOs and screens and I thought he did a really good job of killing some screens because those things can become big plays. Sully has been fairly consistent for us. Has not been a splash player but I thought last week he made some splash plays because those things that he did on the screen, you know, he beats two blocks and tackles a guy and all that stuff. Those are big plays that, you know, maybe sometimes guys don't get enough credit for. But I think he did well and I think -- I hope he continues that.

Q. Have you had a year where injuries just seemed to hit two positions?

TERYL AUSTIN: I'm sure I have. But like I said a few weeks ago, nobody really cares. We just have to get the guys that are here, get them up to speed and have them perform. When you saw, we last two guys in-game, that hurt but when we had an opportunity to get guys ready because they are professionals and good at their job, they were able to perform well enough to help us get a victory last week.

Q. You've had six or seven guys that were long-time starters that you would not have had available to you in the room or building in the past, where would you be now?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, that would be a tough one. I think obviously when the COVID hit and they expanded the practice squads and allowed you to keep veterans, that was helpful to all of us because now you don't have to have a young guy come in there that maybe you're not familiar with or doesn't have much experience. You have a guy that has some experience and has been in NFL experience and has performed at an NFL level that you usually feel pretty comfortable putting in there. It really has helped the expansion of the practice squad.

Q. Do you think Pat can be a guy that transitions to safety at some point during his career?

TERYL AUSTIN: Absolutely. Absolutely. Pat is a smart football player. He's got good range. He understands the game and I think he's sturdy enough to do it. I don't know if you wouldn't play him down in the box but you would let him roam and do some things in the back. He would give you coverage on slots. He has the ability to do it, yes.

Q. How do you think -- handled the team --

TERYL AUSTIN: Obviously we have to do a better job on T. We allowed him to get out for obviously the big touchdown which was unfortunate because I thought other than that our guys played a pretty good game. They had a third-and-long catch that was big and he had that one, obviously it's a back-breaker and you never want to give those up. I thought our guys played well and played hard, and I thought Joey did a good job there.

Now this week they have a similar guy. Obviously DK is an unbelievable guy. He's got the fastest, I think, time the with ball in his hands all year, like 22 and a half miles. I mean, I don't know if I can drive that fast but he can really run. He's big. His physical, he's competitive. And so we just

got to make sure that he doesn't run for 80 this week.

Q. Did you by any chance see Roethlisberger's suggestion, get rid of the gloves?

TERYL AUSTIN: No, I didn't see that.

Q. He said try to find gloves that match the other team's uniform.

TERYL AUSTIN: I'm more focused on us playing clean and playing good football than trying to hide some other stuff. I didn't see it and -- but that's not what we are focused on.

Q. As a defense, you've placed Mason more than anybody else. What kind of looks is he giving you as a scout team quarterback over the last couple years?

TERYL AUSTIN: He's been awesome. Mason is a real pro. He's all working his craft. And when he's out there, he's not -- he's out there trying to beat us. He's trying to make us better and that makes you better, when you have an opportunity to go against -- if you're going against the first group if you're not the starter, you're going against the first group and you're playing against guys and trying to beat them, that only makes you better.

Q. What does Curry on your staff, and what has he brought in his first year as a position coach in this league and does he bring his own personal story as a player into the room or does he separate that?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think we all bring our own personal stories into the room. I think that's part of coaching. You have to have a personal connection with these guys, and they want to know that you're not just some guy out here yelling and screaming and making them do stuff. What's your story; why do you like to do what you do.

And so he brings that with him. He brings great energy. He's grown each week as a coach, learning different things and being able to do different things and learn in his group. I think he's really -- he's done a really good job for us. I really enjoy being around him.

Q. Do the guys know he was the fourth overall pick in the draft?

TERYL AUSTIN: I'm sure they probably do. You can Google anything now. It's kind of neat that way. But no, like I said, I'm sure Aaron has his other personal story and those guys know it. The neat thing about Aaron is he could be a guy that being such a high pick, and his career didn't pan out the way that a lot of these people want that he

could be bitter about football and all that stuff, but man, he loves this game. That's the neat thing about him. He loves coming to work. He brings great energy. You'll see him on game day, he tapes up. Shoot, he's ready to go.

Q. He's only 37. You guys might be calling him in pretty soon with injuries?

TERYL AUSTIN: I don't know about all that (Laughter).

DraftScripts by ASAP Sports