

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Eddie Faulkner

Weekday Press Conference



EDDIE FAULKNER: How we doing?

Q. Good Eddie, how are you?

EDDIE FAULKNER: Doing good.

Q. With the forecast what it is for Buffalo, do you tweak your game plan or plan ahead for that?

EDDIE FAULKNER: You know, we have such commitment to the things that we already need to do in the game. We need to run the ball. So that won't change from that aspect.

Of course we have some conversations that we need to that are relevant in this situation, so that's what we'll do. But obviously we got to go out there and compete and play our best ball regardless.

Q. What has helped Najee have this late-season surge? What do you think is behind this kind of surge he's had?

EDDIE FAULKNER: That was a lot of the discussion on why we brought him here. That's who he is. This late in the season, that kind of body, that's what you want. That was the purpose of why Najee is here.

I'm not surprised by it. We've been fortunate where he's been able to stay healthy throughout his career and get to this point late in the season, so that part has been awesome.

But I think we can all see kind of how that pile has been moving forward and just the war of attrition that he brings to the defense.

You know, we love it.

Q. Mason completed 18 of 20 passes in Baltimore. When you have a quarterback completing that efficiently, how much does that help? Does that

change things maybe?

EDDIE FAULKNER: I think it was really cool just from the aspect of the environment that he was in and what that game was. To go 18 for 20, that was a big part of it in being efficient and was keeping us on schedule and allowing us to continue to stay to our game plan and do the things we wanted to do.

When you got somebody doing that in general, you feel really good about it. So Mason did a good job last week.

Q. Najee Harris, did you guys emphasize at all getting it up in there a little bit more often, bounce it out a little less, more power less finesse?

EDDIE FAULKNER: Yeah, I mean, some of those run schemes, I mean, they -- the double play, for example. Duo can get on the edge based on what they do front-wise, can get out there and one-on-one the corner, and a lot of times we're hunting that; other times it goes up inside.

Without a doubt, if there is a question of whether I should get on the edge or up inside, we want him to get it down inside. Part of that is also schematics and the part we're giving him, the plays we're giving him that we feel are going to be downhill type runs.

He's been doing a good job with that.

Q. If you look at Najee's career history, he has six 100-yard games. Four in January; one in December; one was in a rain storm in November. Something about this time of year, these conditions that he particularly likes?

EDDIE FAULKNER: That's a cool statistic. I don't know if he likes it, but he works real well in it. Goes back to the original question, first question, just why we went and sought after Najee to begin with, what he brings to the table that way.

Q. A lot of people are talking about Mason and he's playing with nothing to lose. Actually he's playing with a ton in the game. Are you seeing a guy who's playing with nothing to lose?

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EDDIE FAULKNER: Yeah, I think you guys have heard Mike T say Mason has so much confidence in himself. I don't think he thinks on that level. He feels like he can go out in any circumstance and provide what he needs to for the team. I think that's what you've been seeing.

I think he's just going being playing ball and having fun. Has supreme confidence in himself.

Q. We've asked a lot of questions about Najee. What were your first impressions of him? Was it film that you first saw him and he stuck out, a meeting that something stuck out?

EDDIE FAULKNER: I was really impressed by how engaged he was. When that process was going on it was the other end of COVID so there were restrictions on contact you could have with guys and stuff like that in those moments.

When I worked him out in Alabama, how engaging and how much he was into football and loved football, that really kind of grabbed you. I think there was that narrative of whatever, him being a poor teammate or something if I remember correctly when he was coming out. Couldn't be any further from the truth once you got around him and got to know him and what those people from Alabama said to him.

My impression of him has always been high.

Q. What's the biggest key for the offensive line and their success over the last few weeks?

EDDIE FAULKNER: You know, we just been continuing to work at it. We got those questions earlier when we were having some of our struggles. We said the same thing then: Going to come in the lab and continue to work at what we need to and try to get better and better and better, and those guys have bought into it. The past couple weeks have been a by-product of them doing that.

So that's just the way we gone about business.

Q. Najee seems like a guy that asks a lot of the questions always. Have you ever coached someone that's that -- you mentioned engaging -- but that is kind of wanting to learn in that way and asks questions in the way he does?

EDDIE FAULKNER: Yeah. I have. I mean, but he's very -- he wants to know. He wants to know the reason, the why. I think all players should. Shouldn't just go out there and run the plays because coach it said. Get the reason

why. It's just going to make you feel better about the execution and what you needed to and the better understanding of the plan's totality.

It's always sought off that information.

Q. Do you expect Buffalo to try to take George out again like Baltimore did? How do you think he responded to all that coverage?

EDDIE FAULKNER: I'll answer the latter first. I thought it was awesome. There is the growth right there we been talking about off-season, and it's carried over throughout the week. So that's been cool.

I mean, from a football schematic standpoint if I was on defense I would try to. So for a lot of the things that we look at offensively from a scheme standpoint and thinks we anticipate this Buffalo may try to do, it's always going to encompass an element how they're going to take GP away and what is going to be our response to it. I would totally anticipate that.

At the same time, we got to find ways to move him around and get him in spots where we can get him more involved. He's a special talent.

Q. You mentioned the growth. Is there anything that was said to George? What do you think has led to...

EDDIE FAULKNER: I'm not sure. We've all said a lot of things, you know what I mean, just trying to assist in his growth. And what he's internalizing and buying, I'm not sure, but you have seen that growth on the field and off.

So that's been awesome to see.

Q. They're a heavy nickel team, a team that kind of lives in nickel. Have you seen teams do things to make them -- force them out of the nickel? Using three tight ends things of that nature?

EDDIE FAULKNER: They got a commitment to it. I know they got some issues from an availability standpoint at linebacker that I think affects that a little bit. In the times I've been here and played against them they've always been big into the nickel because they have the secondary that can do it.

No. 7 is a really good -- probably the best nickel we played against. Those safeties are all interchangeable and versatile, really good players. I don't think they lose a lot by taking -- you know, I guess I should say I don't think they gain a lot by taking 7 off the field and putting a linebacker in there, because 7 can do a lot of same things

any of those guys can do.

They're just as formidable being in nickel 4-2 personnel than if they would be if they had three linebackers in the game.

Q. How important are your (regarding offensive line - indiscernible.)

EDDIE FAULKNER: Hugely important, but they been that way the whole season. I mean, we're going to have to get movement on those guys up front. They got some freaky talented guys on the edges, inside that are athletic that are going to pose a big challenge. Our guys know that and hopefully respond the way they need to.

Q. Throwing a football in a monsoon versus high winds and snow, is one more challenging than the other? Are they similar?

EDDIE FAULKNER: They all present their own challenges. You know, we're obviously being smart about it and being prepared. You get in the stadium, you say, okay, which way is the wind blowing. This quarter, that quarter, what are some of the advantages we can take of having the wind at our back versus not at our back in the game.

Those are all things that go into the process, particularly when you're in stadium. But however it works out, we have to find a plan that's going to help us be effective in moving the ball.

Q. When Mason threw that deep ball to Diontae, that give you guys some confidence that even in bad elements...

EDDIE FAULKNER: It was more of an intermediate thought and we were running a high low on this defender over there. You know, Tae turns short to long. It was more that, you know what I mean.

Those are things the question I think might have been just asked, those are the things like you really want to take advantage of. If you can minimize risk and throw the ball short and those guys can run long and you get explosive plays that way, whether it be backs out of the backfield on screens or swings or running slants or hitches to the receivers or whatever it may be, and those guys can catch the ball and advance it, you are living pretty good in those kind of weather circumstances like we faced last week and going to face this week.

Q. (Indiscernible.) As a coach, do you appreciate that? Do you like how he approaches his job in that

way?

EDDIE FAULKNER: Absolutely. Isaac has been here before. He was on that 2017 team in Philly that made a run and he has been no-nonsense. He spoke to the offense this week just talking whatever resource we can pull from guys in hopes to get us heading in the right direction we'll use. The guys respect Isaac because of the way he goes about his business.

We love it. We love having him up there.

Q. Did he say, can I talk to the offense?

EDDIE FAULKNER: I approached him. He's a guy of few words. But he obviously when he speaks people listen so that's cool.

Q. This is a broader NFL question. What are your thoughts on the (indiscernible.)

EDDIE FAULKNER: I don't really care too much about it right now. I'm worried about Buffalo.

Q. What is the mentality of this team going into this game?

EDDIE FAULKNER: I think we're confident. Coming off a couple wins there and having some decent performances, I think the guys are confident and feeling good, excited to get in there; so are we coaches.

Q. Diontae had an injury early in the season. Where have you seen him grow and expand his game?

EDDIE FAULKNER: You know, Diontae has always been a really good route runner in that part and doing those, so making some contact catches and being able to catch the ball and get vertical and stuff like that, I think that showed up on tape this year.

So going to have to continue to find ways to take advantage of his talents that way as well.

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