

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Teryl Austin

Weekday Press Conference



Q. Minkah is back. You said earlier he is able to play. What kind of lift is that going into this week. Obviously without TJ but getting Minkah back?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think it's good any time you get one of your best players back in the fold. He's a major communicator back there and does a lot of things for us.

I'm excited to have him back.

Q. Having Minkah in, Kazee, how do you deploy those guys that have been filling in?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, I think we will kind of figure that out as we go in terms of what we think is best for this game.

I think they're all going to play, all have a role. What that role is we'll have to wait and see on Sunday.

Q. How much of a after balancing act is figuring out the puzzle pieces but how to use them in terms of applying pressure in different ways to supplement TJ's absence?

TERYL AUSTIN: Just trying to figure out -- the big thing is what's the best way to use all those guys, because I think we have four pretty good football players, and making sure that we get the most out of them this week.

I don't think it's going to be all coverage or blitz or whatever in simplistic terms, but we have to figure out a way to get those guys in the best positions to make plays because that he have all shown they're capable of making plays.

Q. Allen brings a lot to handle. Where does it start with him and what's going to be the biggest factor for you guys to defend and contend with?

TERYL AUSTIN: Well, he does just about everything for them obviously. He can run. He can throw. He can improvise. The biggest thing for us, I think like most

people, probably go into the game and want to make sure that you try to keep him contained, not let him get outside of the pocket where he can really make some damage, and try to limit his explosives.

You just go into the game with that and you just have to keep plugging away knowing he's a great player and probably make a play or two. We just can't let that snowball. We got to fight back and make our plays when they're available.

Q. You guys are in the bottom third in the league in yards allowed, but top third in fewest points allowed. Why have you guys been able to keep a lid on it?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think our guys, we have given up -- probably when you go look back at it, probably given up too many explosive plays, but then the guys are able to knuckle up and do some good stuff in the red zone and turnovers and getting the ball back. We always look at everything.

Yeah, the yards, you know, you're not happy about it, but most important thing is keeping guys out of the end zone.

Q. When you built this defense, did you conceptually -- like are you okay with that? If we give up some yards but minimize points, is that...

TERYL AUSTIN: No, I want it all. But sometimes you can't have it all. So what would you rather have? If you would rather have something I would rather have less points on the board. If we're holding teams under 20 points a game, then I think that's a good start.

We can get the other stuff in order. But if you're giving up 24, 25, 26 points a game, that's not good. You're going to lose a lot of games in this league.

Q. What has allowed Buffalo to run the ball more effectively?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think they've been doing a good job of really blocking and their runner is running really well. He is a hard tackle. He can slide. He can jump cut. He gets to speed fast. They're doing a good job.

I think they're really doing a good job scheme-wise of blocking. Nothing different than they did, but executing better.

Q. Lose six offensive linemen, at 10% in terms of (indiscernible.) Has that been used more often?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think you can see if it's been used more. I think what you see is they'll use it and get a big guy, because I think they have that big tackle that comes in, and 76, he comes in and blocks and does a good job knocking people off the ball and creates an extra cut back Lane for the runner.

Tight ends are good blockers but don't move people the way he does. That brings them a different element in the run game. That's been effective for them.

Q. Elandon has been dealing with a groin injury, now a pec injury. What has been the impact that he's found a way to get on the field and play for you guys?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think it's good. I think it shows when guys see a guy like Elandon fighting through all those things, toughing it out and still being productive while toughing it out, I think that means something to your defense. It shows a level of leadership. Shows a level of want-to. Shows a level of commitment that we want from all our guys.

I think that really rubs off on people when you see that.

Q. Stefon Diggs, what kind of challenge does he present, and how has a guy like Joey Porter, Jr. developed this year?

TERYL AUSTIN: Stefon is a premier route runner in this league. I happened to be at Detroit when Minnesota drafted him. You know, he wasn't a high draft pick, but, boy, he jumped on the scene like nobody's business. You could tell right away that he could run routes, catch the ball, super competitive.

So we've got our work cut out for us because it's not like he runs routes and runs them from one position. He's all over the field. He knows how to get open. Knows when he needs to break a route off. So we have got our work cut out for us there.

In regards to Joey, I think Joey has been progressing, but I think this will be -- obviously if he's going to guard him and be in the vicinity of him he's going to have his work cut out for him the entire day.

There is not -- you can't take a second off with Stefon. If you do, all of a sudden he's down the field somewhere else and you're looking for him.

Q. ... in the slot complicate how you cover with Porter?

TERYL AUSTIN: I don't think so. I think we're able to do some things if we do want to matchup and get the right guys on him.

So it does create some challenges, but that's our job, to make sure we get our guys in the right spots to have an opportunity to succeed against them.

Q. To the point about Joey, how has (indiscernible) Seattle he got to beat by DK early on and came back and had some big plays against him how what he managed riding the rollercoaster of the season and a simple game?

TERYL AUSTIN: When you sign up to be a corner in the NFL you sign up for that. You're going to win some, lose some. I think the really great ones are able to come back maybe when things aren't going their way and they continue and just keep fighting and make a play at the end when maybe they're not supposed to.

So he's been doing a good job of that. He does. He's very competitive. Doesn't like to lose. So I think that works for him. He's got a short memory. Sometimes too short, you know. (Laughter.)

But he really does. I like the way he competes and his mental makeup in that regard.

Q. When a corner shadows a receiver on the edge and a receiver goes in the slot, (indiscernible) what makes that more difficult or why is that happening? Don't see that a lot.

TERYL AUSTIN: Well, depends on who you have, and a lot times it depends on how your coverage is structured. If you have some coverage flexibility where you can move guys in and still run the same coverages, you're able to keep the matches the same.

If you don't, a lot of times what you'll do is travel and somebody else will pick him up when he goes inside and try to pass him off and maybe work some different coverage schemes on him when he's inside. All depends how your coverage scheme is set up and how you handle those things when people move a guy from outside to inside.

Q. Are we making too much of a deal about the potential weather conditions? Is that more advantage for defense than offense?

TERYL AUSTIN: I don't look at weather conditions because we all got to play in them. It's the same for all of us. I don't think it's an advantage or disadvantage. We're all playing in the same stuff.

I don't think he's an advantage or disadvantage for the defense. Again, I don't think you gain anything from it. We all got to play in it.

It's just to me, the field. What are the guys doing. How they playing. How are they executing. We go from there. All that other stuff is just noise because you can let yourself get, well, you know, weather was bad that's why we didn't do X or this and that.

You can build in some excuses and there is no excuses. Bottom line is we line up and we line up to play. When we line up on this field we line up to win. Doesn't matter whether it's rain, sleet, snow, doesn't matter.

Q. How does getting Minkah and Kazee affect how you move Pat P around? Or does it?

TERYL AUSTIN: Maybe. We'll see. (Laughter.) I don't know. We're going to see that. That's one of the things we'll find out.

Q. Last two weeks got the impression -- Kincaid has had some pretty good games the last two week. Got the impression that's been by design to get him involved more or just Allen taking what was given to him in a lot of cases?

TERYL AUSTIN: I would think it's probably by design. When you watch him run, he's really a smooth runner, really catches the ball easily. I think it's like a lot of the young guys, as the season goes on you learn a little bit more about them and what they can do and where you feel comfortable with them.

I think that's probably what's happening there. He's been there all year, and all of a sudden he starts to increase in his production, because I think the quarterback is familiar and comfortable with him, he's familiar and more comfortable with the offense, and those things go hand in hand.

That's why I think you're seeing an increase in his production.

Q. What's your message to Herbig and...

TERYL AUSTIN: Let's go, baby. That's the message. Let's go. I mean, those guys, we got those guys here for a reason, Marcus and Nick obviously we just drafted and Marcus we signed. But we got those guys for this reason, in case we do lose one of our guys outside.

We been in this position. We were in this position last year and we weren't -- I don't think we were ready or had as much depth behind TJ as we would like.

But I think we have two solid guys this year. We all know they're not going to be TJ. TJ is a one of a kind guy. We like the mental makeup and the way they play and temperament and all these things. It will give us some positives there.

Q. Davis, a lot of times when you have a star receiver, the other guy might be more of a possession receiver. He's a homerun guy. How unique is that and what are the challenges there?

TERYL AUSTIN: I don't think it's unique. I think it's really similar. A lot of teams, they have really good receivers, but guys can do things that they're good at.

I think that Buffalo should be commended because that's what that guys does really well. He gets down the field. I still got nightmares about him from last year. So they do a really good job of accentuate things these guys are good at. I don't think it's anything unique. It's a credit to their staff and what they do.

Q. You've had the luxury of having experienced guys on the practice squad, something that came about post-COVID. Is there more comfort as a coach that you can go to the practice squad to get a guy knowing you've got a guy that's been there, done that?

TERYL AUSTIN: Absolutely. Makes a huge difference. I know COVID was a bad deal but that was a good deal in terms of being able to have veterans on your practice squad and being able to have those guys called up.

A lot of times when you get in a situation you're bringing a guy that's in development, a rookie, somebody that's probably not quite ready. Now you can bring in a guy that's had some experience, played in some big games, and I think that's really something that's really beneficial to all of us.

Q. You get a sense of the perception the practice squad has maybe changed because of this? (Indiscernible.)

TERYL AUSTIN: You mean the perception of the practice squad?

Q. Yes.

TERYL AUSTIN: Absolutely. I think now that veteran guys -- and before you couldn't keep guys I think it was more than three years. Couldn't keep them more than that.

So you would lose guys. But now this allows -- keeps guys engaged, veteran guys around. Allows them to still play. And maybe they don't have to go to camp. They don't have a lot of things they don't do that wear and tear on their body.

All of a sudden you pick them you were for the last six, seven, eight weeks of the year and they're positive for your team.

So it is. I'm sure the practice squad is looked at in a lot different light than it was before.

Q. What's the cons associated with spying at quarterback. We know the pros. What would be the disadvantages?

TERYL AUSTIN: The cons? If you're spying, that means you're only rushing three guys, and so that gives him a lot of time to move around and find targets. Put a little bit more stress on your secondary.

I think it also, because you're only rushing three, there is some escape lanes there and the guy that you have spying better be a bad dude to get Josh down. So you better have the right guy that's looking after him that's able to get him.

Q. A broader NFL question, do you have any thoughts on Bill Belichick leaving the Patriots?

TERYL AUSTIN: No.

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