

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Teryl Austin

Weekday Press Conference



with T.J.

Q. Were you surprised they ran against the nickel early?

TERYL AUSTIN: No. I was just more surprised that we didn't get off to the start we wanted. That's what I was more surprised about. Been very happy with our guys and how we've been playing and the things we've been doing and how we've been starting games. So that was a little bit out of the norm for us.

Q. Going back in and looking at the tape, what helped the Colts have all those big splash plays that this defense hadn't really give up to this point?

TERYL AUSTIN: Just kind of one of those days. I thought we had opportunities to make some plays and to stop some of their splash, and we did not. That's what happens when you let teams get off to a good start. Their confidence goes, and then you are fighting an uphill battle, especially on the road. That's what I think happened.

Q. How do you correct something like that going into the following week?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think we just get back to work. I don't think there's any secret to it. I just think we get back to work.

We know we've been successful more often than not coming out of the gate so far this year, and so we'll get back to work and try to make sure that that doesn't happen again.

Q. What did they do to limit T.J.?

TERYL AUSTIN: They do what a lot of teams do. They double him. They chip him. They do a lot of things. I think that to their credit Joe Flacco did a good job of getting the ball out of his hands.

When he held it, some other guys got him on the ground or got to him, but I think that's really the thing that they did

Q. Do you ever talk with him, does he ever bring up to you the conversations about moving him around more often like some other edge rushers tend to do?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, there's always conversations about what we can do to help get him in the best matchups and do some different things, but I think overall he might have a game or so like he did last week where the guys really just try to really do a good job of keeping him at bay. More often than not he is going to win his fair share, so we like where he is. He feels comfortable where he is.

But he is not opposed to moving around. He moved around in that game one time and rushed from the other side. So we'll do it occasionally, but that's not something we're going to do because is he so proficient at rushing from that left side.

Q. The Cowboys haven't ran the ball very effectively so far this year. How would you use balance not wanting to light the box too much in order to defend Dak and CeeDee and those guys? How do you balance that because you know they're going to try to run the football.

TERYL AUSTIN: Absolutely. I think part of those numbers may be because they got behind in a few games. So they were playing a little bit of catch-up so they didn't run the ball as much as they probably would have liked to.

I know that's part of Mike's identity. They want to have a good running game because it does open up the pass game. So we've got to be careful in terms of how we distribute manpower to try to stop the pass game and still be really effective versus the run.

That's really the challenge, so I've got to be good in terms of mixing up calls, coverages, fronts, all those different things that you try to do every week to make it hard on them to get a bead on what we're doing and stop them.

Q. What are the specific challenges in facing a quarterback like Dak Prescott?

TERYL AUSTIN: How much time you got? You are talking about -- I mean, he's one of the top quarterbacks in the league. He's played at a high level for a long time. There's nothing he hasn't seen. He can move around the pocket. He can create time and space. He can make all the throws.

So when you are dealing with a guy like that, I mean, there's just a laundry list of things that you try to do to limit him and to hope that he doesn't -- as happens sometimes, those guys get on fire, and I think that's the biggest thing.

We have to make sure we don't allow him to get into a really good rhythm because if he does, we all know what kind of outstanding quarterback he is and a challenge that would bring for us.

Q. CeeDee Lamb, just what kind of a dynamic threat can he be? How much of an emphasis will there be to slow him down especially when they're missing some of their other receivers?

TERYL AUSTIN: What did he have, 130 catches last year? We have to do whatever we can to try to slow him down. A lot of people have tried, and he still gets his catches, which tells you how good of a combination those two are. So we'll jump in that ring this week and try to do our best to slow him down and see what happens.

Q. Prescott's numbers have been much better this year when pressured as opposed to not pressured. That's kind of a rarity for quarterbacks. You still have to try to pressure him, though, right?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, I think you always have to bring pressure and to make things uncomfortable for quarterbacks. I think that's important that you are able to do that, but without sacrificing them getting a big play to -- obviously the first guy you are talking about is CeeDee, but they have a really good tight end. They have pieces all over.

You just have to balance when you do the pressure, not that you are going to do pressure because I think everybody goes into the game, and you are going to have some type of pressure package. It's just when do you use it.

Q. How do you evaluate -- I know Nick Herbig got hurt in the last game, but how do you evaluate the job that he did and Leal did when he came in?

TERYL AUSTIN: I thought they played hard and did a solid job. I have no complaints with how they played. Our biggest thing is we know as a group, as a coaching staff

we have to coach better. As a unit, we have to play better.

I'm confident in our guys' ability to bounce back, and that's really all we're looking for.

Q. DeShon Elliott said after the game he thinks you need to work harder in practice. Has he expressed any of that to you? Do you have an opinion of how your practices are going?

TERYL AUSTIN: No, I don't. That may be his opinion. I have no problems with our practice and how we're practicing.

Q. We talked a lot about this offseason about how the additions you made to the secondary, including Elliott, might free up Minkah Fitzpatrick to get some more splash. That hasn't happened. What's your assessment of why and what can be done?

TERYL AUSTIN: Sometimes it's not happening right now, but I got full confidence because I know what kind of player Minkah is and the more opportunities that he has and the more time he's back there that those splash plays will come. I don't worry about that.

I know how he leads our group in terms of the communication and everything working from back there, and it's a lot smoother. So I think as a unit, we've operated really well, really smooth overall, and so the splash will come. I'm not going to get bent out of shape about that at this particular time.

Q. (Indiscernible) There appeared to be miscommunications on the back end of the defense. One guy doing the wrong thing while everyone else was doing one thing. What about the Colts' way of attacking you guys were you able to learn that, Hey, this is how we need to prevent that from happening in future things with other teams?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think it's like everything. You go back and put something bad on tape. You look at it. You figure out what were the issues, the cause of it, the root cause of it, and how do we fix it?

I think that's what we went about doing this weekend -- or this week in terms of making sure our communication is right, making sure we're talking and saying the right things, recognizing the right formations, all those different things.

That's really what you do. You just go and work at it. I mean, there's no secret to it. Can I sit here and say we won't blow a coverage again all year? No, I would be a liar. I wouldn't say that.

It's like anything else. We'll just continue to work at it, and each week we'll have a new set of problems that we have to do and take care of. That's part of coaching. That's part of this business. I think the better we take care of those problems as we move forward, we'll continue to have good performances, and we'll get the plays you saw last week out might be something different, but those plays will be out.

Q. Patrick Queen put the onus of that on himself.

TERYL AUSTIN: I am sorry. Who?

Q. Patrick Queen put the onus on himself as a signal caller for the defense. What has he been like as the signal caller for you guys relaying communications, and what does he bring to the table there that you see?

TERYL AUSTIN: He's been outstanding. He has been outstanding. He is everything we thought he was. That's really kind of what leaders do when things don't go right. He put that on his shoulders.

We know it's not just him, but he put it on his shoulders, but it's all of us, and we have to do a better job at that.

Q. A point you made about trying to find the marriage between rushing coverage and not selling out too much and at the same time still trying to make the quarterback feel uncomfortable. How do you think you guys have walked that line once Flacco got into the game last week, and the fact that it came in a big game, how did that strain decision-making?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think when you look at that, it's going to change your decision-making and how you call the game because they're two completely different quarterbacks in terms of the skill sets. The young guy is going to run around and do -- there's going to be more RPOs. You saw him take off and scramble on a quarterback run early in the game. You don't have to worry about that with Joe, but the different thing is Joe is going to have a lot more in terms of the passing game open.

It went into how you call the game, how you manage that business, and I think at first it took me a minute to get it under my belt, and then I thought we settled down and then we just had -- we just weren't able to complete the comeback and get on more solid footing for the rest of the game in terms of getting the stops when we needed it.

Q. Have you noticed that the less they were calling holding on T.J., that the linemen may be pushing that envelope even more because they're not calling it?

TERYL AUSTIN: I didn't notice that. I mean, it's no different than what I kind of see every week. The great pass rushers get held. You know, T.J. is going to get held every week, and they're going to hold him this week, and they might not get it.

Our job is we have to fight through that because that's stuff that's out of our control, and we just try to put together the best plan we do to try to get him in a favorable situation where that stuff doesn't affect the outcome of the game.

There's nothing we can do about that. We just go play our business. We just try to play ball, and we let New York take care of that. We let whoever is in charge of the refs take care of that.

Q. You use Keanu Benton about 45% of the time so far. I know he is banged up and there are matchup questions there. Is the goal eventually to get him to a place where he is contributing more often than that?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think with big guys, you know, you always want to be careful when you start playing him at 70%, 70%, 80%. That's tough. There's unicorns -- his name is Cam Heyward -- that can handle that kind of stuff. We want Keanu to have a big role. I think I like where he is right now because he's effective, he's fresh. He's is a handful inside when he gets in there. We'll do what's appropriate with him.

Q. It seems like your man coverage is down a bit this year in terms of how often you're lining up man-to-man. Has that been because of the matchups you have had so far, or is that an actual philosophy that you guys have?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think any of you guys that were at camp with us, you know we are going to play a large amount of man and get after people. It's more circumstances in terms of what the game is what's going to help us win the game that particular week. There's going to be games where we're going to be playing a lot of man, and there are some other games where we didn't.

I think it's a matter of what we faced that week.

Q. Sort of on that note, is Joey in your ear and shadow CeeDee this week even though he moves inside more than his assignment?

TERYL AUSTIN: No, I don't think so this week. He may have been in our ear. We'll find out on Sunday.

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