

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Teryl Austin

Weekday Press Conference



Q. Teryl, you've faced Aaron Rodgers a lot of times being in the division. What kind of problems does he present?

TERYL AUSTIN: A lot. I think what happens is when you have a veteran guy, obviously there's not a lot you can throw at him that he hasn't seen. So you run across those things, issues there, and how well you disguise in coverages, fronts, all the stuff to try to keep him out of the right play.

You run across the fact that obviously he has maybe the quickest release I've ever seen on a quarterback. He can flick the ball, and it can go a long way, and he is very accurate. His accuracy is unbelievable. He presents a lot of problems that way.

He still can move around. He's not the young -- when he was younger, I think that's one area that, as they all do, as they get a little older, they don't move as well, but he can still move around. That would be the one area that I think he's maybe going down in, but that's about it.

Q. Did you guys chase the ball about as well as you have all year in that Raiders game in terms of getting numbers there?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think we chased the ball all year. I don't think last week was any different. I just think we were able to -- when the ball was on the ground, we were able to get it this last week.

I've been very pleased with how our guys have chased the ball and the way we rally and get after it. Just some weeks it shows up better than others.

Q. Davante didn't play last week. Have you ever had to prepare for the same player two weeks in a row? How might that change in this setting with Aaron Rodgers?

TERYL AUSTIN: That's happened before, but obviously

we all know when you play against a great receiver/quarterback combination, they have a lot of things that they've done together, and they'll be well-versed.

I don't think he's going to need the whole playbook to be successful. So I expect those guys to get out. They'll be on the same page. It will probably be like they haven't missed a beat.

Again, just having the opportunity to coach against them back when they were at Green Bay for quite a few games, you know how potent they are and the kind of symmetry they have together. We're going to have to get ready for them, the whole team, but it's just another X-factor that we've got to deal with. That's okay.

Q. You guys have talked a lot about communication, cleaning up some of the communication issues. Does that become more of a front-of-the-mind concern when you are playing a veteran quarterback like Aaron Rodgers known for the free plays?

TERYL AUSTIN: It's not so much the free plays, but it is a thing. When we had some communication issues against veteran quarterbacks -- Joe Flacco is one. Joe, who we know is a really good quarterback, he found them. So it's the same thing.

We go into it every week trying to make sure we don't do it. Obviously we have a great crowd at home, and it makes our communication a little bit harder, but we wouldn't have it any other way. It's up to us to work through it and make it work for us.

Q. Mike talked about this during his press conference, the big-picture point of view. For your defense specifically, you're at the same spot, 4-2, as you were a year ago. How are you feeling about the unit at this time now? Cam's health is a big variable in that, but how do you feel you're pacing as opposed to this point last year?

TERYL AUSTIN: I like where we are. I didn't know even know we were 4-2 last year. You tell me about last year. I'm just worrying about where we are now.



I like how we're progressing. I think our guys are really coming together. The thing I do like is the fact that I think when you watch us on tape, I like our team speed. I think we've improved that. We've added some good additions, some good veteran additions, which have helped us.

More importantly, I like the gel of that where we are right now as compared to last year. I really couldn't give you a frame of reference because that's so far in my rearview mirror.

Q. How is Cam playing for you?

TERYL AUSTIN: Cam is playing lights-out. Lights-out.

Q. How much can getting Alex Highsmith back help not only what he can do but limiting how much attention other teams pay to TJ?

TERYL AUSTIN: When you have another quality rusher, they have to account for both of them. Those guys face that all the time.

I don't think it affects T.J. because they're always going to be doing things to take care of him, and now that gives Alex some opportunities. If it does, it keeps an extra guy in the protection. That helps us in terms of not having so many guys out.

So we'll see how they approach the game. We'll see how much Alex is ready to do and if he's ready to do it.

Q. How did that spot hold up last game with new faces in there?

TERYL AUSTIN: Those guys did a good job. We kind of had a little three-man rotation between Moon and Ade and Eku. Those guys all got in there and gave T.J. a rest and worked on the other side.

I thought they gave us some varsity reps, as Mike likes to call them, and allowed us to really do a good job on defense.

Q. Teryl, you guys blitz among the lowest in the league right now. I know that you guys have a strong passer. How do you balance that with the talents of guys like Patrick Queen, Elandon Roberts, and Payton Wilson, who are all good at blitzing down the field?

TERYL AUSTIN: It's probably the same thing I've said to you before. It all depends on who we're playing and what we feel will help us be successful in that game that particular week.

We know that it's going to be some games where we are going to blitz a lot more than maybe we have, but we'll just play that by ear what gets us out of stadium with wins and keeps points down. I think the most important thing is we're keeping points off the board.

We had the one game I think or maybe a game and a half where we gave up too many big plays, but I think when we limit the big plays and do those things, we would like to blitz, but if we don't have to, we won't.

Q. Is this one of those games against the Jets with how they play blitzing could be an asset to you guys?

TERYL AUSTIN: Are you really asking me that right now (laughing)? Yeah, we're going to blitz them every play. How is that?

Q. This is Cam's 200th game, 201st I think. 201st. It's tying Donnie Shell for team history for defensive guys. Donnie played a position where you're not getting hit every single play. What has made Cam so effective this deep into his career?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think the one thing is obviously he has a great mindset. He's an unbelievable competitor. Hates to lose at anything.

I think he keeps himself in great shape physically. He's not beat down. Last year he was a little bit injured, but when he is healthy, he really takes care of his body, and he is strong as all get out.

I think between his mindset and him keeping his body in great shape and staying in great shape, that is really the key. I probably said it up here a couple of years ago, he is a unicorn. For a big guy to play as good as he is playing inside of his age is outstanding.

Q. Donte Jackson has four picks. His career high is four picks, which his rookie year in Carolina. Three. Probably should have four this year.

TERYL AUSTIN: You think? That was a pick six last week. Go ahead. My bad.

Q. Now you've got me confused. Is that something you saw when you were requiring him that he had the ability to do, even though he didn't have the numbers like that in Carolina?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah. I think when he came out, we all knew he had the ability to get after the ball and get the ball. He had tremendous speed, and he was a ball guy. Sometimes guys go to places, and it doesn't quite work

out.

I mean, a lot of these guys, their nature is their nature. What are they? Just like when we ended up signing DeShon, we knew DeShon was a physical presence. He's brought that.

So we knew that D. Jack had the ability to get after the ball. He was a good cover guy, and it's just starting to come to fruition now. So I'm not surprised by it. Not at all.

Q. How much was that part of the blitzing discussion because if you are blitzing, you're playing man, the corners aren't in as good of a position to take advantage like he has so far?

TERYL AUSTIN: That's always an issue. If you are playing man, sometimes your totals are down because you are playing a lot of times with your back to the ball, being able to play vision defense and break and see a lot of things. It does give you more opportunities to intercept. That is absolutely true.

Q. What's led to the rising tackle numbers from Queen?

TERYL AUSTIN: He's just getting used to what we're doing and how we're doing it and being in there, but we all knew it was going to come. The guy is too active.

We've seen it every year since he's been in the league, twice a year when he was competing against us, that we know he is an active football player. He gets around the ball. He runs, and he is getting there trying to get things done.

I just think the fact that he's really settling in and taking charge of the defense and ownership of all that stuff, and I think he's starting to feel really comfortable in his position right now.

Q. Looking next to Queen, obviously you have Elandon Roberts and Payton Wilson. In the even 50/50 split last week when it came to sack count, how do you balance that? Elandon seems to be playing maybe some of his best football, and then Payton Wilson seems to be stronger as the season goes on.

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, and I think those guys have skill sets that we like. So we try to use them both. We don't want to put a guy on the side and not take advantage of the things he does well.

We know E is going to come downhill, and he is going to smash people. Anybody that gets in his way better watch

out. Then we also know that Payton is really athletic and can cover and do a lot of different things for us.

So we try to use their skill sets to our advantage and take, you know, and not have one of them sitting on the sideline the whole time. So it's really just a matter of us trying to take advantage of what they do best.

Q. How would you assess (indiscernible) play so far this year?

TERYL AUSTIN: It's been pretty good. I thought there might be one game I was probably upset with him because he didn't play it to the way he is capable of the, but Joey is really competing. We put a lot on Joey in terms of guarding and moving around and getting him in probably some strenuous positions, like where he's -- it could be a little dicey. But he has held up well, and he likes those challenges.

So I'm really pleased with him. If you are a corner in this league, you're not going to go a whole season and not have a game or two where things don't go your way. He bounces back any time he has a stretch of play that he doesn't like because he is really competitive, and he wants to be really good. That's really a good thing.

Q. Breece Hall, he can turn something into a big play. How do you approach a running back like that specifically?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think the biggest thing we do is you have to keep guys like that contained. You have to be really good in terms of your gap fits. When you come to tackle him, you have to wrap because he will run through you, stiff-arm you, get you down. He has the speed to take it the whole way.

It really becomes a team effort to make sure we contain him when he is running the ball. He does have a special skill set because he's not a back that -- like he kind of goes outside and is window dressing. He will run deep. You will run routes just like a receiver might.

That's where it gets a little tough to really defend him if you are trying to defend him with a linebacker.

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