

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

Thursday, October 24, 2024
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Arthur Smith

Weekday Press Conference



Q. What did you like about what Russ was able to do the other day when you look back at it, including what appears to be keeping everybody calm after a slow start?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, I mean, we had talked going into the game. He told me, (indiscernible), we meet every day, he and I. Talk about a lot of things. We're just going into this game.

I don't care how many reps you have in the NFL, when you haven't played in a while, some of the practice reps, you'd love to come out of the gates smoking. Try to get him in a rhythm. He and I talked about it.

I give a lot of credit to him because that's not easy. First drive was okay. Ended up getting three points. Next couple drives, a couple things obviously didn't go our way. That's a tough spot to be in. You find a lot out about a lot of people.

He stayed, using his terms, he stayed neutral. There was no panic in him. He's an upbeat person. You get to really see who somebody is by their actions.

Really that next drive after those three that didn't go well, we were actually off track. He and I talked about in practice being aggressive in certain moments. Hit that ball to George. It was kind of like got back into sync.

I imagine if you haven't played a while, you go and tee off Oakmont on 1, I saw it (smiling). It was like the U.S. Open conditions, off the tee box. You haven't played a lot, probably doesn't start as fast as you want.

I'm sure you have no problem with that.

Q. Of course not.

ARTHUR SMITH: Of course not (laughter).

I give a lot of credit to him. You find out about people.

That was a big moment for him.

Q. Arthur, when you see he's upbeat, you've been around people that are upbeat, how different is he that way to you?

ARTHUR SMITH: Everybody I've worked with is different. Certainly that's something he takes a lot of pride in.

You've got to have, like I said, you try to fight the emotions. Even as a play-caller going into it, it's about keeping your mindset neutral, being objective, staying in the situation, not overreacting if something doesn't go well early, getting too amped up if it does.

He kept a good, even demeanor. Like I said, that's not an easy stage. There you are, Sunday Night Football. Coming off a big win, 30 points with Justin. You could feel it. Better or worse... You could hear some of the crowd, some of the things being said. He got up off the mat, made a big play, kept going.

Q. Were you seeing ways that Russ used his experience in terms of making tweaks at the line of scrimmage, giving guys calls, things like that?

ARTHUR SMITH: Like I said, nothing came of my Cheesecake Factory reference. That's all package. We go over standard NFL 101. Even if you're on the ball, whether you use code words, the ball package...

I joke with him, give him a Ron Burkle moment, depending on what I say. See if he matches. I was disappointed that Coors didn't send us any beer. But we'll keep trying (laughter). I told him, if he does something rogue, I may catch him in a Ron Berkle moment, see how that goes.

In all seriousness, I thought he operated. There's a lot of things. You look at every game, obviously very pleased with the end result, but we got a lot of work to do.

That's one thing he and I talked about. When you haven't played in a while, make sure operation is good. Not just the quarterbacks, but everybody. We get those chunk plays sometimes, we want to be aggressive.

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

It's a fine line. You want to have that passion, but you get back in the huddle late, you're at the line of scrimmage, you can't operate, you can't get to your checks or your run alerts, however you package it. That can put a lot of stress.

That happened on Van's touchdown. It's not his fault. We need to operate faster. The end result was great. A lot of times when you go back and look at it, you have to be sober-minded and objective. What do we need to do better? You need to be a little cleaner there. End result was great. We got what we wanted. But we didn't need to be rushing that moment.

Those are things as you work through. But liked his huddle demeanor. I think that's been pretty good for the most part all year.

Q. You had plenty of bigger chunks in play-action passes in this game. Was that a result of how the Jets were playing you guys, or something you did better this past week?

ARTHUR SMITH: We've had our moments. The way they were playing us, more similar to Denver. In Denver, we got some DPis. We ended up hitting a lot of one on ones, some of the man attackers.

I think, as it normally does, as you put in a new system, your run game, even with the different combinations of O-line. You start seeing guys get in sync, track of the backs, receivers in the run game. All that stuff is starting to come together. It's a constant work in progress obviously. New set of issues playing the Giants Monday night. It's a combination of a lot of things.

Q. When you mention the aggression that can be good or bad, fine line, specifically aggression with throwing the deep ball. What does it add to an offense when you have a quarterback that has the willingness that Russ has to launch the moon balls?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, I mean, that's been his history. I say that because just to give context. I think Justin has thrown some pretty good deep balls. I thought he did in Denver. Certainly the opportunities, we hit a few. That was a positive. That's been Russ' strong suit.

Same thing, get back in the rhythm. He'd be the first to tell you, we're greedy, we want more. He has been historically. It's what has made him the player he is. He has got a unique spatial awareness and touch. You can drill those things, but some guys have a great feel for putting it out front, know who you're throwing it to, how much you need to lead them, dropping things in there. I

would credit that to really his whole athletic background.

I thought the most impressive throw he made, we were running a keeper out of a gap scheme, and the D end didn't close. They make you hot. You work on that. Not just he got it off, but he was able to get it off where Pat was able to run through I didn't have to catch it behind. To me, that was the most impressive throw he had.

Jokingly, he looked like a short stop. That's his background. That's what you saw starting to get into a rhythm. That's what makes me excited as we keep working.

Q. The way he was able to distribute the ball to so many different people, was that part of the plan going in?

ARTHUR SMITH: Absolutely.

Q. Does he like to get everybody...

ARTHUR SMITH: That's part of our offense. We try to do that every week. It's worked well. Sometimes it hasn't. That's been our mode of operation since I got here.

A lot of that is a credit to the run game. You don't get those looks if you're not running the ball well. Run formations, run actions, in the early down, it syncs together.

Darnell had a few of those. He had one in Indy. Some of the things we were able to do, getting back to Denver. That's who we need to be. Every week there's going to be a different plan depending on how Shane, Bone decide to play us Monday night. We'll be able to adapt.

That's when you're on track, things are working together, a big part of it.

Q. Finding your footing as far as the different schematics you use in the run game, how do you feel about the ways you've been able to open up the different run concepts or growth with all the injuries you have taken on the offensive line?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, kind of goes back to what I was pontificating about earlier, just in terms of why you have to put the work in.

A lot of times you feel like your close. The traditional, old-school, used to get that question in Tennessee all the time. If you're a really good zone team, you like those eight-man boxes. All you need is to get out of a gap. Front combination, receiver in there. The end man, if he's

playing the quarterback. You're displacing one gap. Those are where you get some explosive runs.

I felt at times we've been close. A fine line in the NFL, you talk about details. Difference between a very average run and a really good run, those are the details.

That's credit to those guys and the way we've been working since the spring, Latrobe, getting in sync. It hasn't been perfect, but there's progress being made.

Again, it's got to show in week in, week out. Like I said, there were certain schemes Vegas did, the way they played defense, good defense. A lot of multiple fronts. Jets, top-flight defense. They play a little bit different. Got out of the game plan, to. How you build it goes back to the basics, fundamentals. That's what's been encouraging.

Q. Over the last couple of seasons, we've seen this offensive line get better as the season goes along, especially when it comes to running more zone over gap. Has that been your experience with the teams you've coached?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yes.

Q. Some of those games, they could be more convoluted than gap schemes at times.

ARTHUR SMITH: Sure.

Q. Has that been your experience?

ARTHUR SMITH: Sure. That's the trust. It's a coaching cliché. It does take all 11, how we package things. You're trying to stay out of some ugly looks. Sometimes the defense catches you, whatever. That happens. It does.

Even the basics of a quarterback coming out of his fake, a lot of those actions, going back to those play-actions, however you want to term it, if they're not consistent with it, they don't buy the lie.

There's some teams run the ball, play-action, might as well drop back, because there's no fake up front. The mesh doesn't look the same. Those are the little details. You're talking about a split second to get a backer to step up or move 'em. A lot of times you go back and look at it, the tackle pops up too high, back's too wide, bad fake by the quarterback. That's the stuff we work on every day to improve that. It does. It all goes with it.

Q. Why do you think that when Darnell gets the ball thrown to him, is that just breaking some tendencies when he's in the game?

ARTHUR SMITH: Some of it's scheme. Again, the other things that are working. Your change-up pitch is off of stuff you're doing. A lot of things, too.

You try to reward guys that do a lot of hard lifting for you. The tight end certainly has been Darnell and Prue, Michael when he's been playing. Van Jefferson. Those are things you try to reward guys. You ask them to do the hard jobs. That's why it was cool to see Van score late.

One thing I wish he had done, he should have handed the ball to Sean. His bad. That would have been fitting. A lot nicer than me (smiling).

That's cool to see Van catch that touchdown there. He'll be rewarded because of all the work he's done.

Q. Speaking of Van, you're pretty happy about this, the next time you talk to us, the trade deadline will have come and gone. How are you feeling about that room as the deadline approaches?

ARTHUR SMITH: I said this. Again, that's not my role anymore to really worry about that or be involved. I was in a previous stop.

I just think in the league, people make trades more. So many more transactions. It wasn't the case 12, 10 years ago. Even practice squads have gotten bigger. You got new guys every day, trying to develop guys.

I just focus on who's up this week. What is the plan for the guys, back in a week or two. Return to play. Whoever Mike and Omar send my way, I'll coach 'em up. I don't worry about that other stuff. It's irrelevant. It's like wasting energy.

Overall the group, like I said, we just need to continue to get better and improve. That's real. That's every day. Like I said, Monday night they'll have a whole new set of problems against arguably one of the better fronts in the league. They lead the league in sacks.

There's not an interior line playing better than Dexter Lawrence. I saw a lot of Burns when he was in Carolina. Those guys can get after the Q. We've got to be better to roll Monday. That's where our focus is.

Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports