

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Teryl Austin

Weekday Press Conference



Q. In terms of red zone defense, things obviously get condensed down there, you have been really good this year in the red zone. Is there something you can put your finger on as to why that's happening?

TERYL AUSTIN: Obviously we got some good players that are able to make plays. They don't shrink up when it gets tight and crunchy down there. I think our guys are doing a good job of working at it, recognizing some tendencies of other people, seeing what they do, putting themselves in position to make plays and finishing it off.

Q. How important was it for you to get some depth on the outside? What does Preston Smith do that he can help you?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think it was important. I think it really kind of showed itself when we got really banged up there. We were going into a week, we had T.J., Alex, weren't sure if we were going to have Moon. Had to sign some guys. What it does is it gives us real quality depth out there so we hope not to be in that position again.

We bring a guy that has a distinct résumé in this league, been a good player in a 3-4 system, can set edges, rush the quarterback. We're happy with his arrival. We'll see what we do with him as he gets acclimated to us. We do know we have a varsity performer, as Mike likes to call him.

Q. The fact he's been a defensive end, how does that help you setting the edge?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think he's been an outside guy, a standup guy before. I think with the new system he was playing defensive end. He's got a long track record of playing on two feet and doing that stuff.

I think it won't be much of a transition. I think the biggest thing for him, like most guys, veterans, is getting in the system, learning the terminology, how we do things here. The sooner he gets comfortable with that, the more and

sooner we'll be able to play him.

Q. Mike Tomlin was talking Tuesday about Sutton's versatility, maybe playing some safety. What was the cause and effect when someone was here previously to Fitzpatrick, as many interceptions as he used to get?

TERYL AUSTIN: I'm not sure. I haven't gone back and studied if there's a cause and effect with Cam being here and making plays. I don't know if that's how I would phrase it or put it.

I just think what Cam brings to us is the fact he's a very versatile player and he allows guys to maybe move around and do some things without losing effectiveness in other areas.

Q. Minkah been mostly centerfield. Would you like him to be other things than that?

TERYL AUSTIN: He's mostly been centerfield because that's where we like him. I know right now people get caught up, He hasn't had interceptions, this.

I know this: He shores it up in the middle of the field for us 99% of the time and makes teams think twice about going down the middle of the field. We haven't given up a lot of big plays this year.

The last couple of years when we've had to play him down and do some different things with him, we've given up a lot of big plays. My goal was to make sure as this defense we don't give up a lot of big plays, big scoring opportunities. To me, if he's doing that, he's doing a great job.

Q. As you look ahead to this matchup with the Commanders, what do you have to be aware of with the no-huddle?

TERYL AUSTIN: No-huddle always brings challenges. They're going to keep personnel groupings on the field. You'll see sometimes when you watch the tape people are playing third and longs with big guys. Usually their run guys are on the field. That's part of the challenge.



We feel good about our preparation. You'll never be able to get it exactly how you want it. We'll be adapting as the game goes on. But I think the guys have been wired in about it. We talked to them about it at the beginning of the week. We've worked it and given them opportunities to try to field it as best we can.

But we won't find out till Sunday.

Q. What impresses you about what James Daniels has done?

TERYL AUSTIN: There's a lot that impresses me about the young guy. When you watch him, he's calm in the pocket, he does not panic. He creates space. He moves around. He looks for targets. The first time he moves, it's not just, I'm talk tucking the ball and running. I'm going to slide out and see if I can find my target. If I can't, then I'll use my feet to create a play.

He has really good command of what they do. He plays with a good confidence level. When you watch him, in terms of when he's looking at coverages, different things, in terms of where to distribute the ball, he seems to be looking in the right places.

I think so far he's done a wonderful job for them. We're going to have our challenges with that guy because he can run it, he can throw it, he can make off-schedule plays. He can do kind of all the stuff that you want a quarterback to be able to do.

Q. Talking about the depth at edge rusher, how important is that in this game because of his playing style? How much more taxing is chasing him around the pocket compared to (indiscernible)?

TERYL AUSTIN: It is very taxing. In addition to him running, you have him running around the pocket. Their run game is really good. We're going to be chasing running backs, chasing receivers, chasing him.

It does tax you. It works the big guys. We're going to have to do a good job with our rotation, trying to keep guys fresh as best we can. Really the most important thing, though, is getting him on the ground.

Q. Mike talked on Tuesday about the impact of missing Alex and Nick for an extended period of time. Now with them being healthy, in addition of Preston, how does that open up your options as a defensive coordinator to mix things up more in how you rush the passer?

TERYL AUSTIN: I mean, in terms of how we rush the

passer, we have a certain style. We know we're going to get after the quarterback, and those guys are going to rush. We're not going to change.

I think what it does is getting those guys back, it gives us two healthy groups to go in there and start rushing the passer. When you start losing guys, T.J. is really your only guy that has a big résumé as a rusher, that affects it. When you have other guys opposite of him, then I think that helps us go.

I don't think it will change how we rush; it will change the fact we have more depth and be able to rush probably more quality depth and being able to rush better with others in.

Q. Against the Giants, a few plays you flipped out with T.J. You guys got that one on one where T.J. got the sack fumble. Does this help being able to flip guys more often?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think so. I probably stood up in front of you guys that week and said whatever we have to do, we have to do things to try to help our rush and do that. We'll uncover every stone, try to do everything that we can in our power to help free up T.J. because he's an elite rusher. That was part of the plan that week.

Moving forward, if we need to do it again, whatever it takes for us is what we'll have to do. Again, I can't tell you what exactly we're going to do. I can tell you we're going to try to do what's in the best interest of our players.

Q. Their tendencies with McLaurin, do they do anything that would preclude you from shadowing him with Joey if that is what you wanted to do?

TERYL AUSTIN: If that's what we wanted to do, we could do it. They move him around. He's a veteran. You'll see him inside on the slot sometimes, at weak, outside strong.

If we need to match and make that move, we would be able to get that done.

Q. Why has he built such chemistry so quickly with Daniels?

TERYL AUSTIN: When you watch him, he's a good veteran. A top-notch receiver for a long time. Good route runner. Strong at the catch point.

As a quarterback he looks like a veteran guy when I watch him. He's where he's supposed to be when he's supposed to be there. That gives quarterbacks comfort. He catches the ball. When he's making contested catches, he's where

he's supposed to be. If I'm a quarterback, I got great comfort in that. That's why I can build chemistry with that type of guy.

Q. What makes Jayden Daniels so effective maybe different than a typical rookie in third and short, fourth down conversions?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think because he has the ability. Obviously he can run. It's funny, because I know he's not a big-framed guy, but he has deceptive power. There's guys that hit him, but he falls forward. It's kind of a thing.

I was watching some of the goal line stuff. He has a couple runs down there. It looks like he stopped, all of a sudden it's a touchdown. I think that's one of the things that maybe people underestimate, he does have really good strength. He has good run-ability. Doesn't fall backwards very often.

Q. Seems like they also have some formations, line up one way, go the opposite?

TERYL AUSTIN: They do some different things. That's everybody. They'll have a couple things that will stress your coverage, stress your fronts. That's not atypical of anybody in this league. He probably just does it a little bit better, looks a little faster when he does it.

Q. Cam hasn't played in a while. Can he play a number of snaps or slow work him back in?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think that's to be determined. As I watch Cam run around, I obviously have been around Cam and coached Cam for a while, he's always in great shape. There's always the kind of on the site running around shape and football shape.

I think as the game goes, I'm not putting a snap number on him or anything like that, but just we'll see how it plays out. I'm sure he'll communicate with me if he's good or if he's not good. We'll just take it from there.

Q. Do you try to script how much Watt and Highsmith play or they come out when they're tired?

TERYL AUSTIN: We don't do that. We let those guys play. Guys like that, you have about I would say probably six guys on defense. If they can play every play, we let them play. Six, eight guys, if they can play every play, you let them play every play. If they can't, then they come out, get a break, go back in when they're ready.

Q. They were both out on the interception against the Giants. Did you have a good idea before that play?

TERYL AUSTIN: I knew Beanie had that (laughter).

More so than them being out, what it speaks to is we had some quality guys coming in there, Moon and those guys came in there. We got pressure on them. That's why he threw it over to check-down. Oh, shoot. We were able to make the play.

I can't ever determine what's going to go on. I know we want those guys on the field as much as we can. When they can't, we have quality guys that go in and spell them.

Q. You've been on a coaching staff with Danny Smith for a while. What make him so effective at what he does?

TERYL AUSTIN: Danny?

Q. Yes.

TERYL AUSTIN: I'm not going to comment on Danny. You can watch that (laughter). Danny is Danny.

He has a great reputation in the league. He works his tail off. Guys love him and they play hard for him.

Q. Regardless of Cam's ramping-up process, Beanie...

TERYL AUSTIN: We like where Beanie is. Beanie still has to continue to write his story. We're only halfway through his rookie season. I'm not going to hand Beanie the keys to the car and say he's arrived and all that different stuff.

He's got to continue to work and continue to earn his opportunity to play. That's where we are with Beanie. I think he knows that. I think he'll continue to do that. That's why I expect to see him out there.

I mean, that's not a given.

Q. When it comes to trying to get them off schedule, what is the schedule with the team that's 11 for 11 on fourth down? More aggressive early?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think it does. They do a good job of staying on schedule. I think last week, just coming out of last week's game, they had zero third and 11 attempts, 11 plus. They didn't get behind the sticks at all.

It's really I think important for us, if we want to try to keep them from those fourth and shorts, is to get them into second and long. It's not just third down defense. You got to get 'em in the second and long and move that to third and long. If we don't do that, they have some fourth and

shorts, it's going to be hard. The odds go in their favor when it's fourth and one, fourth and two, third and one, third and two. The offense has a distinct advantage.

Q. Hail Mary defense, how much time do you spend on that? Is that a situational football thing?

TERYL AUSTIN: It is, it's a situational football thing. It's one thing you never do full speed. We always pay tribute to it. We always make sure we've done it ever since I've been here in terms of that on our Saturday practice. We'll continue to do so. Hope when this situation, or if that situation arises, that we handle it the correct way.

Q. You mentioned about Jayden Daniels' surprising strength. Are there things you saw watching a game versus film that you saw in the game and studied it harder in film or...

TERYL AUSTIN: Not really 'cause I think he kind of shows up. If you come across a highlight or something like that, you just kind of see it. I mean, it's even like on the long Hail Mary, the way he was able. He knew he didn't have time, made some more time, got over, got set, then launched the ball. Some guys would have hurried up and thrown it. He got over, regathered. His guys got over because they came from this side to that side, then he launched it and it worked.

He hasn't done anything that surprises me. He hasn't done anything that makes me go I have to go back and look at this again. It kind of is what it is, and it's pretty good.

Q. This Washington offense under Kliff Kingsbury, are you seeing anything similar when he was head coach of Arizona?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think there's some differences. Like anything, they're always tailored to the quarterback. You'll see some of those things.

I know they have some quarterback runs. I don't know if you see it as much maybe as they did early with Kyler Murray, those type of things.

I would say there's some differences. There will be some differences in what routes he throws because this guy likes to throw certain routes that Kyler did or whatever it may be.

I think it's tailored a little more to the quarterback. It's similar. It makes it tough because there's a lot of things that go on in that offense that you have to get ready for.

Similarities, but not the same.

Q. Sunday is going to be the first time three guys from Mercer County have coached in the same NFL game.

TERYL AUSTIN: Sweet. Cradle of coaches. Mercer County, baby. Make sure you get that out there (laughter).

Go ahead.

Q. Your thoughts on that?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think it's awesome. Small community up there in Mercer County. A bunch of small towns. But it's awesome. I know when I was growing up, football was the sport. We all played football, Friday night football. To see guys have an opportunity to do it at the highest level, man, I think it's awesome.

It's awesome for our area. It's awesome for football. Kind of tells a story about football, that you can come from anywhere. You work your tail off, get a couple breaks here and there, you have a chance to succeed. It's great.

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