

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Arthur Smith

Weekday Press Conference



Q. You saw how the package on Sunday, going forward, how do you strike a balance with knowing when to do it and how to deploy it going down the stretch?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, obviously there's a fine line to do it. I don't view Justin as, in, this role as a gadget guy. Justin to me is, we've got two starting quarterbacks. He's a hell of a football player so if he can had he' team and there's-fine line. I thought it would have been -- going down the stretch with Ryan and Marcus but different situation.

So whether you have the opportunity to -- throw something at him and put another dynamic football player out there, that certainly helped out, helped news situational football -- 19, we did at the end and we did it with two quarterbacks and a pass Marcus was had. Ryan out at the end of the year. Marcus was in -- playoff game, multiple game with Derrick -- so we used it in the Kansas City, different situation with the different players, but you know, I still view Justin and he is -- I think presumption starter in this league so it's a fine line. You don't want to be a gadget guy but he can help the team and he is one veteran of a football player.

Q. The first time you used it, you were line the chains, second and 11, I know it might be circumstantial but is that the situation that you're looking for with that type of play?

ARTHUR SMITH: I was actually looking to get to it earlier. We stalled out doing third down and had a few third and longs but too many third and shorts. Stall out some drives early in the game and so didn't really get into a rhythm of it. Again as you get through it, I gave him the heads up and went back to it and felt like that was the best call we had in the situation to get something going. You know, worked out. I think we got 80 yards on that one.

Q. So flag Russ out occasionally?

ARTHUR SMITH: We'll see.

Q. You didn't want him to be a gadget guy or he doesn't want to be a gadget guy. How open is Justin to doing whatever you ask of him?

ARTHUR SMITH: Obviously he wants to help the team and everybody. Every great player wants to play when you're the fifth wide out or third or fourth tight end. That's what you want. But I still view Justin as a premium starter, when you have two starting quarterbacks, it's a unique situation. Yeah, you don't want to overdo it. Every time he comes in there, not a gadget guy. He's a quarterback.

Q. When you look at what Kasim Hill did last week, do you look at how do we do those things, or oh, they are never going to let that happen again and they are going to be spending their whole week focusing on how to avoid that?

ARTHUR SMITH: Again, I think they have smart coaches on there. See it. Thought a better question for Jim Schwartz. But I think there's only one Hill. He's one of the more unique players. Over the years, in the division, a lot of teams try to find a Kasim hill -- but there's only one Kasim hill. They have been playing a fullback this year and that's a completely different set up from Justin. I'm not going to ask Justin to do that. He'll think I lost my mind.

That's why I said, I gave a lot of credit. Sure, when you get in there, whether it's wildcard, you're changing the number. You move somebody out and there's an eligible or they put their car out there, changing some of the -- running the direct runs.

So we've got some Hill and wildcat before with Derrick. New Orleans has a unique -- again, I haven't seen anybody do it at that level and then multiple positions with Kasim Hill, running routes, direct runs, put him on the fullback. It's all over the place.

Q. Did you consider in the first quarter that fourth-and-one? You mentioned you wanted to get to it early?

ARTHUR SMITH: I did. You know, we're getting in there

and we were a little bit rushed. They spotted it. I think there was only 27 seconds. So didn't want to do a wholesale change. Obviously hindsight is 20/20. Wish I had something different in there.

Q. The red zone efficiency has not been where you want it to be a lot of the few weeks. Is that an area where Justin might be used effectively?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, I mean, you look at -- that's why it's always week-to-week and circumstantial. But obviously overall, every time you get there -- touchdown -- in the Giant game it might be two-callback, whatever it was. Not ideal. Washington, we were better, obviously the one we didn't score -- not ideal.

But this past week, yeah, give Baltimore credit. We've got to do a better job there. We didn't want to come away -- 21 points, however you slice it up, obviously we need to be cleaner there. So credit the defense and other thing is, we've all got to do better.

And then just the flow of the game, too. You know, situational stuff. Those are games in games, you talk about winning as a team, obviously you would love to score 42 points but you hold the ball for 36 minutes, the defense plays like that, they don't get it wrong, they got 20 or 30 carries and we've done a good job of possessing the ball and I thought we were physical, especially in the fourth quarter.

Q. Piggybacking off that, I think in 2019 when you were the offensive coordinator in Tennessee, you guys started slowly in the red zone and then transformed into this record-breaking red zone offense. Is there anything from that experience that you can draw from or what do you think was the key to that turnaround when you were in Tennessee?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, absolutely. That's why you keep working. You see it and try not to get caught up in it. Whatever it is. Storylines change for five seconds, used to be 24 hours and now it's maybe 24 seconds. Attention spans are all shrinking thanks to -- inaudible -- but in all seriousness, you keep working and sometimes it is, momentum and confidence. We've got to do a better job in that mid red zone, high/low red or your 1st and 10 on ten or whatever it is and then we're not -- we're not getting to a second one-on-one or whatever it is. That's kind of where we've stalled out and so there's things that we've got to do different, better, all the way around. But yeah, you'd like to think that -- coming out of Washington, hey, we were going better but Baltimore, I would say. But yeah, I've got a lot of faith. There are some other things we can do. We need to be cleaner. The biggest thing that concerns me overall is

we haven't turned the ball over a lot but that's two weeks in a row in close games we turned the ball over in the red zone and come away with no points. That's stuff you've got to fix because that can cost you.

Q. How do you evaluate Russ's play, specifically throwing from the pocket and the quick-hitting game, it looked like there might have been -- didn't pull the trigger or something. How do you evaluate his play?

ARTHUR SMITH: Again, it's week-to-week. That's why you keep working. They are going to game plan. I said it all week. I said, you know, you can watch whatever it was, the game before, or whatever the numbers were trending, but they weren't going to stay the same.

And so every team is going to adapt. Whether they throw something different at you, you know, set read or show your man or back off, play off, or play some junk twos that are trending, show pressure to different guys at spots, Tampa. That goes into it, as well. And they did a good job, and we didn't make enough plays.

But that will be a challenge every week. We'll get in there Thursday night. Obviously they have got a good four-man rush. They have got a good pressure package. Those are games within games.

Q. Russ's yards per attempt have decreased each week. Is there an adjustment that defenses are making or is that something that you guys are doing, not maybe getting as many downfield throws or immediate throws?

ARTHUR SMITH: Give and take. Again, you have a philosophy defending on the play. Obviously you hit enough go balls, shame on them. Not going to give it to you. You find different ways. We got the one to George, I believe in the third quarter down our side of the line, there's an opportunity there. But there's a fine line between chasing those because you become really inefficient in different ways. We were able to get -- an explosive to -- inaudible -- those are games, it's a fine line. You're doing something well, they are doing adapt. You can't reprint the game plan every week. People try that. It's not a good plan.

Q. How do you reverse the touchdown-to-field-goal ratio? What's the key to that, not settling for field goals as much as you have?

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, there's a lot to it depending what you call and what their defense calls. If you're second and long, it just depends. If you're in dropback, most teams are not going to -- be okay with some catch and runs, run after

catch. In the run game, be more efficient -- a lot goes into it.

Again, different game. Washington, thought ran the ball pretty well. Fumbled in one. Last week, like I said, we got into too many second and longs, and didn't convert there. So when you get into third-and-long in that mid red zone area, again, very few people are going to -- they are going to pack the paint and you know, if you go one-on-one outside, but you've got to do stuff before you get in two man on those third and longs really.

Q. Does having Buzz give you the luxury of taking some shots on second- and third-and-long?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, we kind of did that. But again, doesn't get the result you want, you've got to be critical. Where did it break down? What can you do better? You've just got to look at it as a group and a staff and make sure we're coaching the details of those situations. That's what a lot of it comes down to.

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