

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Weekday Press Conference



Q. When defending the two-point play in general, are you operating, you think you know what it's going to be, or are you ready for anything type of approach and did you think you knew what was coming Sunday?

TERYL AUSTIN: No, you just -- I think you have scenario, I'm sure, you go back and you look at what they have done in the past in terms of low red zone, two-point plays, and you just kind of take an educated guess as to what you think they may run and you build a defense around a couple calls around that.

Q. Did you think you had a beat on it Sunday?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think our guys made a heck of a play.

Q. Did they tip their hand on that time out, because they did snap the ball, and you got a little peek at what they might have done?

TERYL AUSTIN: No. Because I thought they were going to run something else before that.

Q. That's what I mean. When the time out came.

TERYL AUSTIN: It could have been. I had an idea, we thought this may go. We told our guys that but the bottom line; you have to play sound football.

Again, like I said, we had a couple scenarios in mind. Thought, you know, some things that we thought they may do, and then our guys just did a really good job of executing what we called and made a heck of a play.

Q. Payton talked a lot about how the play that he made the pick on you guys, he ran that a lot in practice. He saw that a lot as a coach. When you say a player, especially a rookie, put it in practice and a play that changes the game, what goes through your mind?

TERYL AUSTIN: It's really more a testament to the young man, not me, us, but that he's able to take the things that

we are working on and take them to the field because that's really what makes really good players. They take the things that we give them and then they have to do it.

And so when you see that happen, you're happy for him because you know it's coming together for him. The game makes sense, and so he's -- he's a prime example. I think I've talked about him before in terms of I think he's got a really good demeanor, football player demeanor. He asks good questions and he's done that since day one and so it doesn't surprise me that the phrases we talk about, he's able to pick up and use them in-game.

Q. What defines a good question?

TERYL AUSTIN: We always tell them, any question is a good question because you don't want to go with anything unanswered.

But in football, things that are specific and pertain to his position in terms of how can I make this better. I may know what I think is the answer but how can I do this to make this better and be really efficient at it. To me, those are really good football questions, and guys ask that when they are curious and they have thoughts. There's a way to do it, but how can I do it a little bit better.

Q. Can you go into Queen's ability in pass coverage, what he's able to do, whether he's dropping back in Tampa 2 or the hook curl zone, whatever he's doing, and is that allowing more freedom for the safeties or whatever else you've seen in years past?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, I think obviously he can really run. And I'm sure everybody has seen that.

But he's really sharp in coverage. He understands it. So you're able to do different things with him and it does ease some stress off the people line because he can play two, he can play tight ends, he can play backs, he can do those things. It's just a wonderful tool to have because it doesn't hamstring you. You don't get hamstrung about trying to protect a guy because we don't have a favorable matchups. I think we feel pretty good about our matchups when he's in them.

Q. You've talked the last year-plus about working on tackling with Porter. How comfortable are you when he's on the edge with Lamar?

TERYL AUSTIN: Very. Very. He's done a good job this year. We know there's always going to be some missed tackles during the course of the year. Those guys on the other side get paid, too. But I'm really pleased with where Joey is and how he's progressed in that regard.

Q. Obviously in that situation, what is he reading there?

TERYL AUSTIN: He's outside, and the guy at the end of the line blocked. So that just frees him up. So now he can be a football player.

Q. Now that Sutton has worked his way back, how is that impacting Minkah?

TERYL AUSTIN: I don't think it impacts him a ton. I think he's going to fit into a position but Cam does give us have flexibility to do a few other things. But I don't know if it impacts Minkah just as a person specifically.

Q. Does it allow him to do maybe more things or -- for lack of a better term, take more chances?

TERYL AUSTIN: I wouldn't say that. I just think Cam gives us flexibility because he can do so many different things for everybody, and it allows us all to be in different spots.

I think one of the cool things when you have him back is that because he can play any position and move around, a lot of guys can move around and it looks a little bit different to the offense in terms of, what was he playing, corner, is he playing nickel, is he playing dime, is he playing safety, what he's playing.

And when you have a guy like that, you know, it makes the quarterback have to read it after the snap and that's a valuable thing and that's why I say not specifically for mic but for us. I think it's good for us.

Q. You guys largely kept a lid on Derrick Henry in the last game. How does that translate to facing Nick Chubb this week?

TERYL AUSTIN: We've got to do it because we all know how this game -- I think this will be my seventh, eighth one, Cleveland game, being here, and really that game kind of goes how Chubb goes and if he's running the ball and he's really effective against us and we don't do so well.

So he's a big part of what we're trying to do in trying to stop him because he's really, you know, he's coming back, really looks sharp. Still strong. Runs through tackles. Got great vision. So he's got all of our attention.

Q. From your perspective, what are the challenges of facing a divisional opponent on a short week?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think the challenges are the same. I just think, you know, we've just got to be ready to get our energy level up fast and be ready to go because we are going into a hostile environment, and really, I think our guys will be up for it. It's just that's really the challenge for us.

I think the one nice thing is we know these guys. They know us. And so you know, there's going to be no secrets in that regard. But there's going to be, you know, can we keep our energy level and keep your commitment to being great and take it on the road.

Q. How critical was penetration to blowing up that two-point play?

TERYL AUSTIN: Absolutely. He knocked three DBs off. To me that was the catalyst for Joey, sitting right there and having an opportunity to make a structured tackle on Lamar.

Q. How important are the young guys like Nick and Joey been for the defense when it's been so loaded with veterans?

TERYL AUSTIN: It's good because it gives us a good mix. Gives us guys with a lot of speed and energy. We've got obviously some older, I won't call them older, but older guys, veteran guys who have a lot of experience, and I think they kind of feed off of each other. It's been a really great mix. You know, going forward at some point, you hope those young guys become the guys that they are learning from right now.

Q. Can you go into, also, Keanu's rise from year one to year two? A defensive lineman, sometimes just looking at a stat sheet, they will not see the boatload of tackles.

TERYL AUSTIN: They are just going to so he a guy knocking a whole bunch of guys around and making space so guys can tackle -- that guy? Yeah, that's what Keanu was doing.

Q. With Cory Trice getting closer to returning, how does he fit in now that you guys have more defensive backs coming back?

TERYL AUSTIN: We'll cross that when we get him back for sure. Cory was doing some really good things for us before he was injured. Once we get him back and evaluate him, we'll just move forward, and those are good props to have, when you have got a lot of good guys that are available to you.

Q. Getting the contributions you guys have gotten from all of the off-season acquisitions, is this kind of a best-case scenario for what you envisioned and being able to add to this defense at this point in the year?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, I think, you know, you go into it year year and the guys that you add, you hope they pan out how you thought they would and sometimes this works and sometimes it doesn't. I just think we had a nice run with the guys we've had here that we brought in this year. They fit in pretty seamlessly. They are all contributors, and I think that's a good thing.

And so we'll just continue to move forward. Every year is a new year. So next year you may be seeing something different but this is where we are right now.

Q. Ken Heyward talks about the maintenance that Mike has him on at his age. First off, you're down a couple d-linemen injury-wise but the depth there, does that allow -- and is it a coincidence, like after a bye week, you played the most snaps all year and this week you have a short week coming up and fewer snaps this past week.

TERYL AUSTIN: Part of maintenance. The thing is, again, you'd love to keep Cam at a certain percentage of snaps because we do have good depth and that will keep him fresh for what we feel. So he's playing at a high level throughout the end of our season.

And so it is -- it's part of the plan. He gets days off. We have the other guys get work. We get in the game. We try to make sure that we're real conscious of how many reps we give him because he's not 25-year-old Cam where he can take 95 percent of the reps but he can give you a good 70 percent and be really efficient and really, really good and that's what he's done so far.

Q. You had a number of bad balls at the line of scrimmage, defensive line. Is there a second anything like that to that, more than just getting your hands up? Is there something else they do?

TERYL AUSTIN: It's not just put your hands up randomly. As you know what they are doing on their pass rush as they get close to the quarterback, keep battling and

working the quarterback they have to see that he's ready to throw to get their hands up and be in the throwing lane. There's a lot to it. It's not as simple as, Hey, I'm going to run in and knock it down.

So our guys do a really good job of that. We'll work on that. They have done it in shreds and preseason camp. They will come off the sled and we'll do drills in preseason sometimes and batting balls and going those things. It's like anything, those things don't happen by accident. They are worked. They are practiced. And so our guys are doing a really good job at it.

Q. When you have players that are capable of taking a GAME over by themselves like T.J. and Cam and Mike, but what does it say about your defense when you face a really good offense like ballot and you shut them down, that's not what happens and your big plays come from Herbig and Payton Wilson and T.J.'s one sack is kind of a coverage sack and that you're getting contributions from all 11 guys and more than 11?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, I think to me, that's a sign of a pretty good defensive team that you have depth and kind of, you know, it's what I think the best thing about our guys are. I told them this before the game, the night before the game.

I said the best thing I like about you guys is that when it's time to make a play, nobody is afraid to make a play. I mean, somebody always seems to make a play. And that's a testament to them and the group and how they work together.

So it's great that you are not always depending. You know you have those bell cows that can do it but everybody else is stepping up when it's needed.

Q. Heyward was referring to James as a gun slinger. What's the message to a defense with a quarterback that's going to be willing to take chances?

TERYL AUSTIN: And we have to make sure we are on our screws. We can't have any bone coverages. We haven't have anything where we are relaxing or something and we think the play is over. Because this guy has the arm talent and the ability, he is not afraid to throw it.

So to me, that's what that means. That means we've got to be really on top of our game this week in terms of rushing coverage, discipline, at all times.

Q. Is Eric Rowe more for depth or a seasonable worker that comes in November and helps you down the stretch?

TERYL AUSTIN: He did a great job for us last year, and so we think he's really a quality football player and we'll bring him in for depth if something happens. We know he's a guy that if we need to, bring him up and he'll be really successful in the role that we need him to be in, and he's also a quality, quality human being.

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