

Pittsburgh Steelers

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Arthur Smith

Weekday Press Conference



Q. The way that Russ is throwing the ball around, is some of that by design or is that just him sort of just figuring out guys open, get it to him?

ARTHUR SMITH: Obviously can't be rigid, force something that's not there. But that's how we want to operate. I think we're at our best when everybody gets involved. Naturally certain guys will get the majority of the targets, but when you're able to do that, that really helps you become efficient and you get a result that we had on Sunday.

Q. Is it helpful too when you got a first-year quarterback? Obviously great accomplishment-wise. When you're trying to build a rapport, it sort of helps if a guy (indiscernible.)

ARTHUR SMITH: Absolutely. Morale is a big part, too. Nobody wants to -- the guys that were able to do that as an offense in my history have been the most effective. May not work every week but guys (indiscernible) decoys on every play, and makes you have to defend it, or at times you get into known targets. They're playing percentage on the other side, or this guy is high target guy or this guy. Then you got to be able to win the matchups. So certainly helps.

Q. I know some of the strategies against the Bengals throwing to the running backs was matchup specific and exploit some of their zone. Did you guys unlock or find something you can carry over in future weeks?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, I mean, I think obviously depending on the plan, not only when we want to attack, but even as a team can affect it. I think it's a result of a lot of things. The way we've been building, we're in a year one; learned a lot of good lessons over the years.

You get a lot of new players and obviously new offense, whatever you're trying to build. You want to continue to evolve week to week.

We got a lot of change week in and week out in the lineups. You want to be peaking as we get into December, certainly heading into January, hopefully February.

So that has a lot to do with it as well. Again, sometimes the strategies and what you're trying to exploit or what they think you may do. You know, sometimes I think it's obvious and you change it up, and I think it helps builds confidence too. If we have to go air the ball out, we can win that way as well.

Q. Can you go into the built-in checks that you have with Russ?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah.

Q. Because like for example, seeing everything he did pre-snap on the big pass to Van, stuff like that?

ARTHUR SMITH: Sure. Yeah, I mean, some of it, you know, just forgive me because it's such a competitive league. I'm very careful. I've always been this way with the quarterbacks. Very few people you talk about reads and stuff like that, and that's not really necessarily what you're asking, because there is a lot of things that you see the way the game is covered.

A lot of people with a lot of knowledge, but that would be hard for me to comment a lot of other teams what they're doing. You know certain schemes, certain? Plays, some things are obvious. Unless you're in the meeting rooms things may change week to week. So you're very careful with any information you want it get out.

In terms of just operating offensively, I think most NFL offenses now, whether you build in a play call, and it's a lot about logistics, too. I joked earlier this year nobody is picking something random out of the air.

But that's the logistics. That's the stuff you practice and meet on. If you're not on the same page, there could be some really bad unintended consequences. So a lot of that is built up, things we been working on all year, certain games, certain moments situationally comes up, that's where that work pays off.

You're careful how much you want to put on them. As things have evolved and people first started packaging things, being some of the run things became obvious maybe you're only going to the two safety rotation away. There are so many things, if you saw the call sheet. And this is a lot around the league about that play when you put it in.

There is a lot of work that goes into this week and how you're teaching the quarterback. This is what we're looking for on this play. You get this; do this. But that's all part of the call. Again, it would be chaos if everybody wasn't on the same page. That's where you want to get. Brooke asked about where you are in the season, you know, with a rookie center, new quarterback, a lot of new players. You know, everybody is trying to have the pin last. Drop a play, you obviously want to exploit this coverage or this defense.

A lot of things get talked about and defenses are doing the same thing. You play these teams and they have a zone call or a man to man call and you get certain bunches of stacks, get to a zone check, those are games within the games. There are some really smart defensive players.

That's when we were playing a really smart Mike linebacker. He's the one, or the quarterback is, or you got a safety. If you're in a certain formation, it may just be one on one, but you start motioning down, those are games within the games and now we're trying to exploit that. I think we've we did a pretty good job most of the year doing that.

That is what's going on on the line. That's all part of a play call and that's what you want your offense and certainly the quarterback, he's the one that's commanding it, to be able to see that. To me, that makes you hopefully as lethal as possible.

But they're doing the other things on the other side. Those are fascinating. I could go on forever and won't but those are fascinating. Watching tape you see the nonverbal; you'll see it this weekend. You know, calls, they're trying to change their signals up; we're trying to change ours up.

The TV tells you everything now. How do you come up with (indiscernible) for run, pass, whatever you're doing. It's comical because when you go back and watch the TV, because you got to change them week to week, some of the stuff you hear, that's the fascinating part of this sport.

Q. What did you like about your offensive line coming out of halftime against Cleveland?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah.

Q. What has that unit done better?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, talked about that last week. Give credit to the other side. Sometimes it was just execution. Sometimes a team comes up with a new plan and you got to adjust in between series. Happens all the time. That kind of led to that four minute call with Justin.

Realized, okay, that's how they're playing. That opportunity came up, we talked about it, and you feel like you locked him into the call, whatever their plan is.

Going back to the Cleveland game, you go in there and sometimes you made a change; that one was about executing. There was a lot of things going on which led to some of those negative plays in the first half.

Sometimes you got to bow up and execute. Obviously those guys, credit to them in the second half. Everybody involved gave us a chance to win that game when it didn't start the way we wanted it to.

Q. When you start to use your run people involved in the pass game and change tendencies, is that something that's pre-planned? How important is it to do that?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, a thing that we try to work really hard on is if you're going to operate that way, you have to have enough counter punches off it. It goes back to the question about getting everybody involved. So a little bit it's unconventional warfare. Make something look like you're doing this, but you're really doing something else.

Saw a little bit with CP, Pru, Skowronek, you know, those guys, so you just hope it doesn't become so obvious. Execution was great and those guys were on the same page and that really kind of opens other things up.

Q. When it comes to George, how do you walk that line of encouraging him to be a fiery competitor, making plays, but also avoiding lack of focus or losing his cool?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, every player I've had are wired differently, so it's been definitely with every player. Ultimately anybody that's out there, you can't do things that hurt the team. That's really what it come down to. Different guys play with different passion. Obviously when any player we've had, when you're doing things that hurt the team, those are different stories.

So you manage it case by case. Every player I've had has been different. We'll see in a couple weeks. AJ Brown, he got popped a few times for punting, punting the ball in the

end zone in Tennessee.

You know, just case to case. But the thing I've always said is when you have a guy that likes to work and loves football, those are different issues. Biggest problem I've had with guys are guys that are maybe cursed with a lot of ability and they play because they're good at it. They don't have the same passion.

When a guy is willing to meet you halfway, and as I said case by case. Thankfully we got guys out there that love to play and they work, and these practices the last couple weeks have been as good as any practices I've been around.

Q. Is George one of those guys?

ARTHUR SMITH: What's that?

Q. That loves to play?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, absolutely.

Q. How does that manifest itself?

ARTHUR SMITH: It's case by case. Those are private conversations. Obviously the head coach has his own relationship with players. Just very practical. Sometimes it's different conversations.

Again, everybody is different. Those things are certainly talked about and some of the things you do in private, sometimes it's in a meeting. Whatever you feel is best for that player and really for everybody to be accountable.

Q. When you get another head coaching opportunity, what's something that you would take that you learned from Mike?

ARTHUR SMITH: A lot. I've been fortunate to have a lot of great mentors. You know, he's another Hall of Fame coach that I've had the chance to work for. Joe Gibbs being another one. Good mentors. You constantly learn and evolve. I mean, not just Mike, too, it's this whole organization. It's different here. It's unique.

It's a credit to a lot of the people and the way this thing has been built and the way this organization goes day by day about their the daily business. It's an awesome climate, culture, whatever you want to call it. And that's from the top down.

Q. You guys have become one of the better screen teams in the NFL last six games. What is it to make that the case from your offensive line to your running

backs?

ARTHUR SMITH: It's just a matter of just working. Year after year, some years you look back, and what I found, and there was a big effort pre-season to get a lot of that stuff called. You can do drills and sometimes in practice. It's just continual work. That's got to be an advantage.

Again, if you want to play the way we do, we have had some big plays especially lately, with a lot of different actions. Just wish there was some secret or some guru thing I would tell you but just a lot of work.

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