

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Teryl Austin

Weekday Press Conference



Q. (Regarding turnovers.) Just wondering about your personal evolution. You guys do a lot of drills. Where did that come from? Where did that start with you? When did you realize how important that could be for your defense?

TERYL AUSTIN: I've been in different places where you have an emphasis on turnovers, but really clicked for me my first coordinator job in Detroit. Thought that was one of the ways we could help ourselves get really good, fast.

And then my first year we were good; the second year weren't so good, so we really emphasized it. I think my last two years we were pretty good at turnovers. I just found that's a way for us, when you don't play a perfect game, maybe some things aren't going the way you wanted, you can get out with a victory because of how important the turnover battle is.

Q. I know Grady Brown is in charge of the takeaway culture. What does he add to that? What has his role been?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think he's the leader of that in terms of setting up the drills, doing all the different things. If we have any changes, if he feels like maybe there is some time we need to have an extra turnover drill or circuit, he'll be the guy in charge of that. It always emphasizes it to make sure that it's not out of the forefront of our guys' mind. It's something we have to take into the stadium every week.

Q. Do you feel like you had a handle on the Bengals until those last two possessions?

TERYL AUSTIN: I would never say we had a handle on those guys.

Q. Seemed like it was going pretty well for you and then they scored two drives quickly.

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, we just didn't do the things that we

needed to do in those type of situations. You know, when they're in a two-minute mode, they need multiple scores, job is to make our rush and coverage are working together and that we're not giving up big chunk plays, and we did the exact opposite.

I am not going to say we had a handle on it, but we just didn't execute as well as we wanted to those last two drives.

Q. ...presence or absence at all been a factor in where and how they are deploying Jeudy?

TERYL AUSTIN: I don't think so. I think they were still able to use Jeudy and move him around and get him the ball in many of the same ways they had been. It looked like they may have been using 81 to do some of 19's role. Not all of it. I'm sure there was some carryover for Jeudy.

I didn't feel like it was a big, hey, you got to take your role and 19's role. I didn't feel that way in that regard.

Q. What does Joey need to do to avoid the penalties?

TERYL AUSTIN: It's just a matter of work. The thing is, we ask Joey to do a lot, put him on the backside, sometimes one-on-one with the best receivers, or maybe may not the best receiver, but he's the guy that's not getting a lot of help.

So some days are going to be rougher than others, and so it's just a matter the getting back in the lab and continuing to play. Like one of the things I told him, and I always tell corners this, it's always the next play, because if you get caught in your own mind and you're chasing something that happened a while ago that you can't fix right now, doesn't make any sense.

Let's move on to the next play. Be better the next play. He's done a good job and I'm sure he'll bounce back.

Q. Joe Burrow was able to make plays by moving up in the pocket. Jameis Winston was setting plays by getting out of the pocket. What do you guys have to do better as a defense to contain those guys and keep them extending plays?

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TERYL AUSTIN: Those guys do a good job. They have a really good feel. Obviously Jameis was a pro baseball prospect and Joe was a really good basketball player and those guys have really good spatial awareness and feel.

So we have to be good in our rush lanes to try to make sure we collapse them, know where the escape lanes are, base on our call where they may be, and being aware of that and how to close them down.

That's always going to be an ongoing thing when you have good quarterbacks who have good field, good vision. We just got to continue to work at our craft to try to be a step better than they are that weekend.

Q. Donte Jackson has a career high, and AFC-leading five interceptions. Has he exceeded expectations at this point or did you expect this production when you guys acquired him?

TERYL AUSTIN: I can't say we expected the production because it hasn't been there, but we knew he had the ability to produce for us and produce in the ways he has. When he was coming out he was a ball guy. He can run. He had coverage ability. So it's just coming together for him. It's good for him and good for us practice.

Just got to continue to keep that going.

Q. With Nick, you talked about how he takes away the center of the field. How much do you feel like turnovers are coming his way, he's helped filter from the outside? Do you feel like that's happening, or do you appreciate his ability to keep people out of the end zone even if it's just tripping them up before...

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, he does so much for us. I know sometimes we all want splash, we all like splash. But a lot of the things that he does that allow us to line up and play another play and have an opportunity to stop people, that's immense in terms of us keeping people out of the end zone and doing different things.

We love the splash, but he really does make us all better all around in the back. You know, there will be some throws down the middle, but not a whole lot. There will be some stuff that gets out because it's the NFL, but he does a great job. He's run a couple things down this year and given us an opportunity to keep them out of the end zone. That's really all we ask for that safety position.

If you can give us another chance on defense, then we have a chance to keep them out of the end zone and stop scores.

Q. However smart you might be as a coordinator, however clever you might be to come up with something to confuse the quarterback, still find that most of the interceptions that are caused are caused by the pressure up front? Is that still what forces the most picks?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think it's always a rush and coverage component. You know, everybody always likes to say, hey, it's the rush that gets home, but sometimes that rush gets home because the coverage is taking them off -- the quarterback off his first read. Now, oh, I got to take my eyes somewhere else, which gives the rush time to get home.

It always works together. I would never say it's just one. We preach that to our guys because we have to work in unison. If our rush is cooking and getting home fast but we're not covering and the ball is out and we're not completing it, doesn't make any sense.

By the same token if we are covering and our rush is not getting him on the ground and then he extends the play and creates a big completion, then that's a problem. It always works together. It really does.

Q. Some of the defensive guys in the building with the takeaway culture, they said that if an offensive guy is walking around the building with a football they'll try to punch it out. If they are just walking around practice holding a football, they're trying to punch it out. How much has that added to carryover to the game? How much does it help to have that mindset all the time?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think it helps tremendously. It's what you're teaching and what you live and breathe. So it's not -- these aren't lightning strikes we're able to cause turnovers. Sometimes people say, hey, you can't count on the turnovers all the time. Well, we do, because that's what we work at.

It's no different than if we're counting on and saying, hey, we're going to line up and cloud this guy. We want to make sure we get our hands on him every time and we work it and we expect to see that in the game.

It's no different with the turnovers. We work the turnovers, we expect to see it in the game, because those opportunities are there every game.

Q. Coach, last game against Cleveland they slowed TJ Watt down. Should we expect to see more movement with TJ and the defense?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, they slowed him down. I don't know if I can give you what can they do with TJ in terms of that, but I just think that every game is its own entity. We'll approach this game like we always do, trying to get our guys in the best spot to make plays.

Then we'll go from there. We will see if we were successful on Monday morning.

Q. Was that something you got to start working to expand upon? You hit the Giants a few times. It popped up again against the Bengals this past weekend. What's either gotten in the way or been the emphasis to get it back over...

TERYL AUSTIN: Well, I think that it's -- they're all game plan specific in terms of what we feel we can get done. We don't just move them to move them. What we do is move them when we think we have an advantage and it gives us an advantage.

So it would be the same thing. Any time we play, hey, we're only going to do things we think are helpful to our cause and helping us to win.

We're not always right, but that's -- when you see them move, it's not just, well, let's move them because. It's because we think it gives us an advantage.

Q. What do you think Njoku's impact is on what Cleveland tries to do offensively, and how do you feel you guys have done covering that end?

TERYL AUSTIN: He's got a big impact. When you see him in the red zone, he's a big man. He caught one, got us last time. They throw the ball up. Last week he had a nice seam route. So he is a big target, big part of their passing game. He is one of the few guys that catches balls all over the field. Catches check downs, catches crossers, catches seams; he does it all for them.

He's a unique individual in that way, so we're going to have our work cut out for us. I don't know the stats. I don't care. I don't feel -- I feel confident that we have done a pretty good job overall against the tight ends we've faced.

Like I said, every week is a new week. We've got to accept this challenge and rise up to this challenge we'll have Sunday.

Q. Nobody goes for more up on fourth down than they do. Do you have to adjust the way you call third down because they might turn third and 7 into 4 and three and go for it?

TERYL AUSTIN: Correct. You know, you treat certain areas of the field or certain times you're going to treat that as four down territory, so it does affect your call, what you're doing.

That depends a lot of times on the game flow. Kind of figured the way the game was up there last time with the snow and the bad weather wasn't going to be hey, let's get in this area and kick it. It was going to be four down football and we weren't successful.

Q. How common is it for players to signal coaches meetings? How much do you see that filtering to the rest of the team?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think it's fine. The thing is we work together. We always try to tell our guys, man, we're it's not "us" and "you." We're all together. It's "we." So we have no problem with our guys being in there and being part of what we're trying to craft and put on the field.

It's important that guys understand and know that. Those meetings, any player that would like to come to those meetings are welcome. There are a few that come in there, and it's really -- I think it's a good thing because then we can get some feedback. You're talking sometimes, and there will be some things as coaches we may have some ideas, and you present it to a player so you get a player's perspective right then.

You don't waste a day of practice and figure out that the player's perspective is a little bit, hey, wait a minute; that doesn't work so good for us, how we're trying to get it done on the field.

A lot of things to get ironed out before we get to our Wednesday meeting with the group.

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