

# Pittsburgh Steelers

## Media Conference

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

## Arthur Smith

### Weekday Press Conference



**Q. Without your top guy, do you have to scheme things up differently or do you expect somebody to come in?**

ARTHUR SMITH: I mean, obviously you adapt. It's the reality in the NFL. Sometimes you have contingency plans. That's why you plan ahead. If he plays, here's what we're going to do. If he doesn't, how many snaps, whatever it is. That's what you try to prep ahead of times so you're not scrambling an hour before kickoff. It's part of your job.

When that happens, yeah, I mean, you adapt. Some things are by committee, some things you may not run. Certain things you change in your game plan. Certain things you change with that particular player.

That's kind of how the game went. There's a couple things couldn't do. I think we executed clean. It's a 60-minute game. It doesn't matter how you start. Some teams can start fast. Obviously love to score every possession.

I thought the rest of the guys stepped up and made plays. Scottie Miller is somebody who certainly took advantage of it. Obviously Mike. Plan to get Mike going more. George certainly came through, as well.

**Q. Does it help having a full week of practice?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, it's a little bit like we knew we were going to play with McCollum at center a couple weeks. Then you have to have your backup plan. Somebody else goes out. That's our job.

**Q. Russell has targeted more receivers than anybody in the past two weeks in the NFL. What has led to that? What does that do for the offense?**

ARTHUR SMITH: I think it opens a lot of things. That's what you want. (Indiscernible), we had our best offensive output of the season. Targeted a lot of different players even with George out there.

It helps. It helps for a lot of different reasons. One, you're not just playing '90s ISO basketball, lock in to make a W, cloud to a certain guy. Opens up things.

I think it improves morale, too. A lot of guys don't take for it granted. When you put installs in, human behavior, everybody feels like they've got a chance. Naturally certain guys take over games.

Definitely want to do that because I think it makes you harder to defend. That's really the reality of it.

**Q. How has the growth of your younger offensive linemen expanded what you can do well?**

ARTHUR SMITH: I think that experience helps. There's some things early in the year, a little bit how we're built as a team. 'Cause there is an art to it, too.

Especially some young linemen, guys just get thrown out there, that can certainly hurt their long-term growth. You want to protect 'em. You have to do what you need to do to win the game.

Like everything, experience. Those guys have consistency for a few weeks now as they improve together. There's familiarity, especially up front. Verbal and non-verbal. Just understanding week in and week out these young rookies. It's such a long season, hopefully got a lot of football left to play. Hope they don't get mentally fatigued. That can be an issue, too.

It certainly helps. It's been exciting to watch those guys grow together.

**Q. How have you seen their cohesion grow, especially in the past month or so as far as their communication, how they adjust to what defenses are doing? This past game, you ran it three times on third-and-short and got it three times.**

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, one, we weren't going to let what happened before happen, where you got caught whatever it is. You adapt. Hindsight is always 20/20. That was a little bit of it.



Obviously didn't get it done the first time for multiple reasons. I hate talking about it, because sometimes it sounds like excuses.

You have to give them credit. Thought we executed pretty well. I thought we were very physical in every down. What you want to see, you get in December, we talk about our style of play, it's not just the five guys up front, sometimes you can watch a couple times to appreciate what Jefferson did in that game, Scottie (indiscernible) week in and week out. He's got a lot of dirt back to him, which we appreciate.

One of the guys that I don't think, unless you're really sick in the head and love O-line tight end play in the core, is watching Darnell Washington week in and week out. (Indiscernible) is not a guy that can dominate at the wide position quite like Darnell has all year.

**Q. At this point in the season, there's a lot of tape on you. Do you have to evolve things or add different wrinkles?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Sure. You're always conscientious of that. Week in, week out we try to do the best we can. Plan of attack. You're in people's recent cut-ups, they're trying to find tendencies. It's something situationally.

We've been able to play pretty well in the second half. We've had some leads in games. Offense, naturally it's getting run tendencies. If you don't take that situation out of the game, those numbers can get inflated. That's part of it.

Again, the plan of attack. We wanted to run the football come hell or high water last week. I thought we did. It wasn't always pretty. Kind of made it a fight inside. Popped a couple drives. We had a long drive. The one that stalled out in the OPI was a pretty long drive. That style of play started to come on.

My favorite play is the one that probably sealed it. Van's block. Naj know we need to get down, don't need to get greedy, don't chase points, medals. Kick the ball off. That was great to see.

**Q. The two rookies that you got, can you speak to the challenge they have on the interior this week, what Philadelphia has on their side?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Philly has invested a lot. I don't know. It's between the Steelers and the Eagles who is trying to post more players out of Athens, Georgia right now.

Darnell up on the right next to Broderick, it's going to look

like a 2022 Georgia spring practice. That's a credit to Kirby Smart and that program. He's got a lot of players. Obviously Jalen Carter. Disruptive force inside. He was that way coming out. He can flash, take over a game. Obviously Jordan Davis inside. Williams is playing well. Nolan and Sweat and Covey. Then Bond is another guy. Talk about a guy taking advantage of an expanded role. Really good football player. Can rush, can play behind the ball. Seen him at a previous stop where he was more of a teams guy. He's taken a starting job. Became one of the more impactful linebackers in the league.

It's what you want. You don't want things to be easy. If we want to get where we want to go, we have to get through these challenges. Exciting to go on the road, play these two teams. Across the state. We're fired up for it.

**Q. With Isaac, can you talk the importance of two-year offensive line, specifically the run game, whether you've seen his demeanor change given he's going to Philadelphia this week?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Isaac is pretty stoic. Nothing really gets Isaac's heart rate up, one way or the other, emotions. He's got Nolan. A quiet kind of pro.

But his experience certainly helps, especially playing next to a rookie center. We got a lot of that early in the year, too, with James Daniels. That helps as well. He's got a good football mind. Consistent player.

**Q. Spreading the ball around, is that something like we need you to do this or is that the way Russ...**

ARTHUR SMITH: It's a philosophical approach. The old adage, when you get into a rhythm in a game, depending how they're playing you, taking advantage of that. Getting into a rhythm is important for any quarterback. That helps, is part of it, too.

It who we want to be. Like I said, we don't want to become obvious. There's a natural tendency. You can see it a lot in Georgia's target shares. That's a philosophical approach. Plus he fits trying to do what he does, too. Try to play to his strengths, his experience.

**Q. UNC, their head coach search process. What do you think about Bill Belichick taking over there?**

ARTHUR SMITH: I think it's awesome. It's great even for the whole game of football. You're talking about somebody that's won more than any coach, right, in the history of the game. The college game has changed. Times I've had conversations with him about a lot of things in the last couple years, learned something every time.

He's a teacher of the game. He's got a lot of wisdom that's carried over. Why wouldn't you want to go learn the game of football from him, because like any great coach, he's a teacher first, really still a student.

When I studied Jim (indiscernible), guys that have a lot of practical wisdom. I'm fired up for the university. I'm sure he'll do a really good job.

**Q. You guys obviously put in things, you get a buy-in from the players, new offense. Does going out and having the results you've had, scoring the points you've had, a lot of these guys that have been here haven't done, do you see a different level of morale or buy-in?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah.

**Q. When you see the results, what does that do for you?**

ARTHUR SMITH: It builds trust. That's what you're ultimately trying to sell, is build trust, relationships. You need success, otherwise you're still just selling hope. Going to the shareholder meeting trying to keep it going until you make a profit.

When you have some success, it definitely helps in this industry. Yeah, that's a huge part of it.

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