

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Teryl Austin

Weekday Press Conference



TERYL AUSTIN: Well, he was part of that zone drop on that side, and then Justin stepped up and tried to make a play, he saw the receiver coming, and then he was able to close and finish. He wasn't out of place or freelancing or doing anything like that. He was just playing good solid football. We just didn't play well in a lot of areas. Got to get them better calls, got to get them where they need to be. But it was a matter of when we looked at the film, we have to do a better job of getting off of blocks, tackling, being in the right spots, giving the guys an opportunity to do that. That's where I come in.

But it's something -- it happened. Every now and then you have a stinker like that. You don't like them, but it gives us an opportunity to get back to work and be better at it this week.

Q. Did you see any similarities, especially in the zone read stuff, from what happened in week 1 to the Baltimore playoff game?

TERYL AUSTIN: No, it was not the same thing, I did not feel. I thought it was different. It wasn't that. It was just some things where I didn't think we got knocked around, I just thought we missed some opportunities. And so I didn't feel that way.

I know how I felt coming off that field at Baltimore last year, and I didn't feel the same this year. I feel good with our group. I feel good that they'll rebound and we'll play better moving forward.

Q. What do you guys look about putting Keanu at the nose position and you guys go to the three-man fronts?

TERYL AUSTIN: Well, he's a big strong guy. He's a wrestler. That's what he played in college, so he's got a lot of familiarity there. We like the fact that he gives us some flexibility to play out as a 4-1 and do those things. We just like him. We like the flexibility. I think that's when you have big guys that can move around like that inside and

not lose effectiveness when they move from one position to another.

Q. What do you want to see better from him in the run defense efforts? I talked to Cam Heyward this morning, and he talked about using your hands more effectively?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think, like anything, there's a lot of things that go into it, technical things that go into it. With the big guys, everybody thinks it's always just brute strength, but there's a lot of things in there that we're all working on at all positions to be technically better, and then there's just a lot of, as Mike likes to call it, kickass. Sometimes you've just got to get out and beat a block, get off a block and win.

We've been emphasizing the technical part of it, obviously, and then also challenging our guys to be really good in terms of kicking butt.

Q. Can (indiscernible) help you a little bit more this week? Would you expect to see him in there more? I think he played like 10 snaps or something?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, he may have played a little bit more than that. But I do; I think that we've seen really good progress from him, and I think as the season goes, he'll continue to get better and grow, and we'll find a place for him because he can do a nice job in there, and just like a lot of young guys, you don't want to overload him early and have him fail. You want to get him to have some success and then grow him from there.

Q. Is he a defense guy?

TERYL AUSTIN: He is.

Q. Have you found a spot that works best for him yet as he's developing, whether it's inside or outside?

TERYL AUSTIN: Not yet. I think he's capable of doing both, but I think right now early, we've had him at the 4, opposite of Cam out there because a lot of times that stuff in there at the nose happens really fast in terms of the different type of blocking schemes, what kind of center



you're dealing with, all the pinpoint stuff that happens. But he's working, and I would be willing to bet he'll be one of those guys that has flexibility to play up and down the line when it's all said and done.

Q. Obviously you missed DeShon Elliott this week, but what does Jabrill Peppers bring to this defense? What do you like about him? What's kind of his fit?

TERYL AUSTIN: Well, I think you're talking about a nine-year veteran who's a high-pedigree guy. He's physical, tough, a good tackler, and getting to know him in the last couple days, our guys think he's got a good football IQ in the sense of what's going on around. A lot of times it's just putting it into their own terminology so they can function faster.

So we like those things about him, and we'll see how far it takes us this week.

Q. Do you expect to be able to use him right away, and do you expect Chuck Clark to start?

TERYL AUSTIN: We'll see how it goes, and at the end of the week we'll be able to make a determination on where we are there.

Q. What did you see at the end of the game? You guys got a stop, then the field goal and then a stop. What kind of changed there at the end for you?

TERYL AUSTIN: Well, I think our guys -- we feel we have a good defense. Don't get me wrong; we did not play well last week. But I thought our guys rose up in the moment when it was needed.

I think some of the things had changed. Just we got going, and I think when they got one-dimensional and had to pass, we knew they were going to try to run it because they had been running it and had some success that we buckled up and were able to get two stops in a row. I think that's a testament to our guys and how they hung in there. It would have been real easy to just say, we're getting our ass kicked and bad things are happening and we're not doing this, so on, so forth, but they never did, and that's what I really like about the group. I think we have a good solid mentally tough group which allowed them to continue to play and reach a high level when it was needed.

Q. Can you go into kind of the way the nose tackle position has evolved even over the last 10, 15 years? Can you go into how the position has evolved over time?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that the nose tackle before

was just, hey, I'm a 2 gap guy, I'm going to sit in here and I'm going to kill people and keep guys off my backers, but now with so much 11 personnel and three wide receiver, that same guy has to be able to play as a 3 technique sometimes, a 2 technique, he's got to play different things.

I think the flexibility that you're looking for now in a nose tackle is probably a little different than you did 10, 15 years ago, where it was like, hey, as big a guy as we can get, a guy that's unmovable. But now we have to have guys that can still do those things but also give you some options as a 3 technique, as a 2 technique.

Q. Have you found that guy to come off a bench for your 3-4, just a squat nose tackle?

TERYL AUSTIN: You could, but then it's the same thing in terms of amount of snaps. If you're going to play 80 percent of your game in nickel because they're in 11 personnel and then you have a guy that could be your starting nose tackle that's going to play maybe 10 snaps a game, is that worth it. We may need it at another position.

I think sometimes that always goes into the big picture that sometimes guys don't see, that we may want to have that guy up but we can't have it up because we may have added injury, we need another special teams guy, we need another defensive back, we need another receiver, whoever it may be.

Because of the lack of snaps, somebody else has to absorb it, so you can't keep that specialized guy up sometimes.

Q. How do you think Juan and Chuck play together, and how does Echols fit into the mix?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, I think they did well. The nice thing was they got a chance. We got Chuck early in camp, so he got a chance to work with Juan quite a bit up in Latrobe, and I think that helped when Sean went down. They're familiar with each other from working with each other in camp.

I think I like the way they worked together. I think it was good. We'll continue to see where that goes.

Q. With so much of a veteran presence on this defense, how much can you lean on that experience and that leadership to get some of these issues you're talking about corrected quickly?

TERYL AUSTIN: That's what you have to do. A lot of the stuff that as coaches we're in charge and we do that, but there's nothing better than peer pressure, the guys in the



room wanting to do better, pushing each other to do better.
That gets a lot of results.

And so I think with our leadership and the type of guys we have, that's why I feel pretty confident that we'll be able to get the issues that showed up in the first week, we'll try to get rid of those.

Q. When you didn't have Joey and if he's not able to go this week, is Echols versatile enough to let you do whatever you wanted to do with Ramsey in the beginning game plan?

TERYL AUSTIN: Absolutely. I believe so. I know when we first got BE in the off-season, we anticipated him playing a big role, and then falling into Slay and Jalen later, it was kind of like, okay, but he's still a really good player. I don't feel hamstrung about anything now that he has to step up and get into a more advanced role.

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