

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Teryl Austin

Weekday Press Conference



Q. It looks like a couple times you were that close on blitzes, that they ended up getting plays off of it. Did you feel like it was almost there?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, but almost doesn't do much for us. Almost gets them first downs. But I did think some of the execution of our pressures up front were really good. We got what we wanted. We were able to get in and get some hits on the quarterback. We did our rush and coverage. All that stuff has to work together, and right now we're just a little bit off in that area.

Q. What gets it --

TERYL AUSTIN: Again, it's rush and coverage. If we're having the good stunts and we're working the good movement up front, then our coverage has to be tighter in the back end. Sometimes the coverage isn't -- the coverage is really tight, and it gives those guys up front a little chance to get home.

Like I said, I just don't think right now we're working on all cylinders, really putting that all together consistently enough to be really good right now.

Q. Do you expect Harmon to play this weekend, and how do you balance wanting to get your young guys in there, get them some time, but also knowing maybe they don't know what they're doing?

TERYL AUSTIN: We'll see where he ends up at the end of the week, but I think, if it does come to it, we'll be pretty judicious with his snaps and try to work him back. More importantly than -- he's probably going to lack some football conditioning, football shape. So you don't want to throw a guy in there that's really not quite ready in those regards.

I like the progress he's making, and we'll just kind of see where we end up at the end of the week.

Q. How about your other guys, so Black and Lee, how

do you juggle maybe wanting to maybe see them but also knowing maybe they're still young and not ready?

TERYL AUSTIN: We're thin there right now, so there's going to be a rotation, and guys are going to have to step up. We've just got to -- I think those guys have to rotate.

Again, the one thing is, like you said, you don't want to give them too many snaps, but if you can spread them out and we can get 15 -- 10, 15 snaps amongst them, maybe a little bit more, and get quality snaps, that's what we're looking for.

Q. Why has communication still been an issue? What can you guys do to shore that up?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think it's -- when you look at it, especially in the secondary there was the -- by the time we got about halfway through the game, I don't think there's anybody that had played for us last year. So those things take a little bit of time.

It's not an excuse. We have to get it done. So that's what we're really working on. We always have something to do and something to work on, and that's something that sometimes those things happen because in the heat of battle things move a lot faster than they do in practice, and those things have to be worked on. We'll just continue to try to rep it and get in the game.

I think the more game situations these guys have together, I think we'll start gelling and playing better and making the right calls and getting in the right spots to give ourselves an opportunity to be successful.

Q. In both games you guys have been beat by the deep crosses for the long touchdown, where a safety goes one way, the ball goes the other way. What do you guys have to do differently to handle that when other teams give you that look?

TERYL AUSTIN: Not do that shit. That was just fucking bad, and that can't happen because it wasn't something that -- it wasn't something that was unaddressed over the course of the week. So we have to -- those are things that I think sometimes as a coach it gets you a little bit off kilter

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is when there's things -- you know, known things that happen that you work on them, and then they still occur in the game.

We all know in this league, if you show a weakness in something, it's going to continue to show up and keep coming at you. We've opened the door to have those things happen -- you know, come at us every week now. So that's why I get a little bit pissed off at those things.

We have to be better than that because I think our guys are better than that. If I thought that they couldn't do it, then we've got the wrong guys in there, but I think our guys can do it. Just got to get it done.

Q. You've got another new piece on the defense for you in Peppers. How has he assimilated with the weekend? Could he play some snaps on defense?

TERYL AUSTIN: He's done well. You can see he's a real pro, understands the ball, really works -- I think the thing that I like about him as I watch him through these last, the last week when we got him and now this week, is the fact that he really tries to communicate and talk things. I think that's more, for young guys, sometimes they don't want to talk for fear of making a mistake, but he's talking and saying it because that way he'll know if he knows it or not. I really like the way he goes about his business that way.

As far as what he does this week, I'm sure we're going to find a role for him and get him out there on the field because he is a quality player. He's a good tackler. So I'm excited to see what he does for us this week.

Q. You guys have had -- you guys kept the Seahawks to a pretty low success rate in terms of running the ball, a lot of one yard here, no gain here, even got a few losses. Then they also rattled off just a few explosive runs. Why was it -- after reviewing the tape, why was it all or nothing this game, and how do you prevent that from happening again?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think a lot of stuff that we talk about and I talk about specifically with our guys, we have to make sure we don't get beat before the ball is ever snapped. Sometimes -- what I mean by that is, if you don't make the right call, you line up incorrectly, you're going to be in the wrong spot once the ball is snapped and you give the offense an opportunity to be more successful.

That's really been an emphasis for us in terms of let's stop beating ourselves and make those guys really beat us. They've gotten some runs, and we have to give them credit because they got it done and we didn't, but we gave them a nice helping hand in getting those things done.

Q. Ekuale was noticeable in his 20 snaps against the Seahawks. I know you used him at nose a lot in camp. Do you have a preferred spot for him? Or do you see yourself juggling a little bit with the versatility he does put on?

TERYL AUSTIN: Prefer to see him inside, but he does have some versatility because he does have some quick twitch to move outside. Because he is a veteran, he gives you that, and he understands that he can move outside and give you some stuff. So we'll be looking -- again, with attrition, we'll be looking for veteran guys like him maybe to pick up some extra snaps so you don't have to throw those all on young guys.

Daniel's been good. He's had a good two weeks. He had a really good week of practice last week, he's got a good week going this week. So I'm excited to see how he performs and the versatility he does bring to us.

Q. To follow up on that, Yahya Black looks like a natural guy to take on double-teams in the middle. Is that just a no go?

TERYL AUSTIN: No, it's not a no go. I think where he is right now, again, he gives us some options out there because we do have, you know, between Daniel and Keanu, two guys that can play inside, where he can play outside, he can play them both. I think right now that's where he's been practicing and doing a lot of his work.

You don't want to really up-end him and screw him up and put him inside and give him a full boat inside because the blocking schemes are different, the things that come at you are a little different. I do agree with you. He is a big, strong man, and he can eat up double-teams and he can get off blocks, and he's only going to get better.

I hope, once we get back to full health, we'll be able to start teaching him a little bit inside in addition to the outside stuff.

Q. His full health?

TERYL AUSTIN: No, the team, the line.

Q. Most of your opponents have run to their left, your right, a lopsided percentage. What's your reaction to that, and do you have a way that you feel like you need to address that?

TERYL AUSTIN: No, I don't have a reaction to it. I think that's sometimes some choice things. People run that way. They'll run away from T.J. There's some -- when you have

stretch teams and teams that do that stuff, a lot of zone, you take a risk when you run at 90 because sometimes he'll play it straight, sometimes he'll come inside, and he's able to give you some tackle for loss stuff that's a little bit unpredictable.

I think, when you run the other way, they're looking more not so much to run at head, but to cut back, to see if there's a lane on the back side.

We've just got to shore up our things. I don't look at it as one side or the other. As I look at it, we've got to shore up our run defense period. It goes back to what I said earlier, we've just got to quit beating ourselves before the ball is ever snapped.

Q. You talk about beating yourself in that position. For you since Baltimore, these first two games, lots of yards on the defense, how frustrating is that knowing it seems like it's such a simple thing just guys being in the right spot, but yet they're not?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think we're a little bit different than last year. I thought last year towards the end of the year we kind of got knocked around a little bit. I don't think we're getting knocked around this year. I just think we're not as in sync as we need to be, and that's really us starting to try to gel together and play better, more consistently.

I think it's a little different scenario. I know we haven't been -- obviously we haven't been really good right now, but I think, as the season goes, as we go, we'll continue to get better. I think our guys are in that mindset, and I think we have the ability to do it. So I think that's a clear difference from where I thought last year. I just thought we were getting knocked around a little bit last year. I do not think we're getting knocked around. We're knocking people back, we're just not in the right spots.

Q. Inside linebacker Payton Wilson is taking more on on his plate. It's like he's performed in run-down situations, and then in a related way, what are your thoughts on Ja'Whaun Bentley, and how quickly could he be part of this conversation?

TERYL AUSTIN: Speaking of Payton, he's taken on a lot more, and he's done well. He's handled the volume of it. He had a couple plays in there that probably didn't look so good last week in that regard, but in terms of him trying to be physical and coming downhill and hitting and running and chasing, it's nothing new. It's what he does. I'm encouraged by what, the extra that we put on his plate that he can handle.

As far as Ja'Whaun, just got him, and we're really trying to

work to get him back in football condition. We know he is a thumper. He is a big man. He plays the kind of physical game that we like, and we'll just see what happens as we get a little bit further along with him.

Q. There's a time where it looks like Jalen is playing an intentional sort of trail coverage instead of keeping typical inside leverage when he's in man. Is that something that you guys just give him the liberty to do because that's his -- like he has those credentials as a three-time All Pro, or are those -- are there times where you want him to more establish the inside?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think your coverage leverage and depth off receiver in terms of high-low, inside-outside, that all depends on what coverage we're running. There's going to be times where you think he's wrong but he's actually right. Then there's other times that he has to be tighter, and I think that's one of the things that we talked about with our secondary, and it really was the first question today.

We had some really good blitzes, but our coverage wasn't tight enough. How do we get that done? We just go back to the board and look at it, what's our alignment? How do we get -- what's our technique? How do we get into those positions so we can be successful?

So it's not a because he did it somewhere else. This is kind of how we do it here. I think that's important that guys -- and he does -- that guys understand, hey, there's a way we try to do things here because we feel it gives us the best chance to win. He's on board, but we've got to be -- again, we've got to be better at executing.

Q. Just to go back to what you said earlier that you need to shore up this run defense. Should we expect for Cole Holcomb to play more this week?

TERYL AUSTIN: There's a chance. I thought Cole went in last week and he did a good job. The big thing is Cole's been out almost two years. He's been really working hard. He does, he gives you a different physical presence. I think that I like where he's going. I think he's trending in the right direction.

Guys that deserve to be out there will be out there. I would expect to see maybe a little bit more of him as we move along in this campaign.

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