

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

Thursday, September 25, 2025
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Teryl Austin

Weekday Press Conference



Q. What separates Justin Jefferson from the average NFL receiver?

TERYL AUSTIN: You watch him, he's a really good route runner, and he's kind of a fearless receiver. He catches contested balls all over the place, yards after catch. He runs through stuff. It really makes him a complete receiver. That makes him hard to deal with.

Other guys sometimes you can kind of figure out where they may come up short in some areas, but he doesn't really come up short in very many areas. If he does, it's just a tiny bit. If I wasn't playing against him, I'd be like, boy, he's fun to watch, but we've got to go against him this week.

Q. Having Jordan Addison back too, that receiver group is quite a tandem.

TERYL AUSTIN: It is. Jordan, he's a touchdown guy. He gets down the field, really good body control. Obviously got a chance to watch him when he was here at Pitt, new kind of receiver, and he goes out to SC and he's doing the same thing. We've been watching that young man do his deal for a long time. Getting him back, I'm sure he'll be excited to get back in the fold and try to help his team.

But he does, he brings another threat. That way, I'm sure, when you watch people, they like to kick the coverage to -- when they have one good receiver, they kick the coverage to the good receiver. Now when you have two really good receivers and a good tight end, it makes it really tough. So we've got our work cut out.

Q. Kind of going off of that, I know there were communication issues among the DBs for you guys at one point in time. Do you feel more comfortable this week having a week of work?

TERYL AUSTIN: Every weekend we get to work and every weekend we get to play, that's an opportunity for us to get better and to get more familiar with each other in the heat

of battle. There's certain things that go on in camp, and that's good, but until you're in a game and see how guys react and go in the game and learn them in the game, now that we're starting to get those game snaps under our belt, I kind of see us getting a little bit better.

We've got a long ways to go, don't get me wrong, but I feel we can get there because I think I like the talent and the work ethic of the group.

Q. Talking this week about the fourth down stuff, the frequency with which teams go for it now. It's just part of today's game. As a coordinator, it's been around a while now, but are you getting used to it? Do you almost have to prepare your guys, hey, they can be on their own 15, and we're going to have to defend that?

TERYL AUSTIN: Absolutely.

Q. Will you be ready for it?

TERYL AUSTIN: Absolutely. We know that. I think, as everybody gets into the analytics, a lot of the analytics always tell you early in the game, if you get a fourth and one, go for it. As the game goes on, there might be different reasons why you wouldn't.

So we kind of expect that, and I think our biggest thing is to let's not get ourselves in the fourth and one. When we have guys in third and 12 and third and 13, those have got to become fourth and fours, fourth and threes, and you discourage them from doing it.

We really -- that's been really a big focus of ours is third down anyway, because we have not been very good, and trying to get off the field on third down because, one, we extend drives, we play a lot more plays than we need to. Two, it gives our offense the ball back and gives them an opportunity to get another drive and get some rhythm. When we're not doing that, it hurts the team.

Q. Go back to that communication, what is it, especially on those third and longs, that's keeping you from making the stops?

TERYL AUSTIN: Some of the third and longs aren't

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communication. It's just how we're doing things, and we just have to be tighter in terms of where we are in terms of our drops, in terms of what our landmarks are. We do some spot drop stuff. We have particular landmarks we like to get, and sometimes we don't get exactly on them. Sometimes we don't break. There's a lot of different things that go into it.

So it's really not just one person or one thing. We've just got to really -- the timing of it all. It's like anything. You've got 11 guys moving at once, and the timing has got to be really good for us in terms for us to have really good execution. That's really been a big thing for us is to continue to work on the execution, the communication aspect of it because I think, if we do that and we get in our right spots, things are going to go right.

Q. Mike talked about the difference with Wentz being just sort of a grizzled veteran. How differently do you approach a game when you're going from what would have been a young guy's fourth NFL start to a ten-year veteran who's probably seen everything you can throw at him?

TERYL AUSTIN: You're not tricking those guys. I think really what you do is you just try to go back on what you know that he's really good at, where his strong suits are. Then how can we limit and take away some of the things he's really good at as a veteran quarterback? That's where we'll start.

We just want to make sure that -- we know he's got a big arm. We know he can make all the throws and all those different things. He's got good mobility. He's got all the things you want.

As a fallback measure for them, he's a really good person to have. So for us, we've got to make sure we just don't let him play to his strengths and try to make him play a little bit left-handed in the things that he does.

Q. You've been with T.J. for six years now. What impresses you the most about him?

TERYL AUSTIN: The thing that's most impressive about him is the way he goes about his business and works and prepares. It's been my experience that guys that have been really unbelievable players, possibly future Hall of Fame players, the guys in the ring of honor at whatever team they're on, they all have that unbelievable drive and work ethic that doesn't come from us. They have it. It's internal. They get after things a certain way.

Then what happens is their ability kind of takes over. So you don't see -- for guys like that, you really don't see big

ups and downs in their play. It's really consistent play, really consistent, high level play. I think that's the really -- the neat thing that I've seen. He attacks the game. This is my seventh year here. He attacks the game the same way as when I first came in here, and that's impressive.

Q. You said the other day he still doesn't feel comfortable on the one side. How do you balance what's best for maybe the team or what's best for him?

TERYL AUSTIN: We always try to balance what's best for the team, and he'll -- he's going to have his opportunities to rush on his preferred left side and do those things. So we're always trying to do what's better for the team. We know sometimes he's uncomfortable, so the things we do, it's not all the time, but we have to be able to move him around so that they just don't -- you know, like we've talked about many times. Okay, T.J.'s over here on the offensive right. Okay, let's turn a protection. Let's chip him. Let's get the tackle. Let's make it extremely hard for him.

It doesn't take a lot sometimes for him to move around that they go, okay, this guy could be somewhere else. He's still got to prepare for it. I know it is not his favorite side, but if I was an offensive coordinator, I don't care where the guy is, I'm going to take care of him.

Q. What would getting Joey and DeShon back allow you to do?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think it would -- again, two guys that have been with us, I think it just allows us to -- you know, it's just I think familiarity with being here and being with me and in this system allows to you do some things. It gives you some flexibility because sometimes you get in the game and there's some things you may not have worked on that we go, hey, we need this this game. Or hey, guys, we're going to do this, and they have recall and they're able to get to those things, where when you have newer guys, that's not the case. You've got to figure out how to adjust and deal with what you put in that week.

Q. That last game, Hunter Henry seems like he's open all game and he had a really good game. This week you'll be facing another good tight end. Last game what I noticed, a lot of times when T.J. would get chipped by the tight end Hunter Henry, it seemed as though the defense wasn't recognizing the tight end going into his route. What do you do from a recognition standpoint? Even though he's on T.J.'s side, it seems as though the defense isn't recognizing the tight end and the tight end is wide open?

TERYL AUSTIN: We always recognize the tight end and the chips. There's certain things that we'll do where we



say, listen, when that chip happens, we say send a guy and try to get to the quarterback before he has an opportunity to get out. That's some calculated risk that sometimes we'll take.

There were some times that he was open, and a couple things where the two touchdowns he had were both -- we had some coverage issues. It wasn't that he was just spectacular in terms of running great routes and all that other stuff. That was a good scheme, they got us on that. Give them credit for having that.

I think we'll be fine in terms of guarding tight ends and getting them after chips. I feel confident that the leak-out stuff and the different things that happened last week hopefully won't occur again.

Q. What did you see from Derrick in his first regular season action?

TERYL AUSTIN: I liked it. You see all the stuff we thought we were getting at camp. He's got good mobility. He's slippery off of blocks. He can do some different things. The biggest thing with him right now is just the conditioning, but it was good to see him out there and see him kind of pick up where he left off at camp.

I think really the thing that gets me excited about him is he's only going to get better. You're talking about a guy that at the beginning of the week we weren't sure if he was even going to make it. Then all of a sudden he shows up, he makes it, and he played, I thought he played well for the amount of snaps he had. I just anticipate him getting better and better as we go on this journey.

Q. We talked about the two defensive backs coming back, and there's also Peppers. What is the ceiling with this secondary? There's a lot of big time talent there. What is the ceiling, and what can it mean overall for this defense?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think there's a nice high ceiling in that room because of the -- we have talent, but we also have veterans. We have some good young talent, and I think the mix of all that, as you play and gel together, to me the secondary is a lot like an offensive line. You have to get to learn to play together because of all the intricacies that go on with your group.

I just think they have an opportunity to really get better. I'm not going to go out and say, hey, we're going to be X, Y, and Z, but I just like the fact that we do have a lot of room to improve. I think, if we make those improvements and do that, that's going to help us win a lot of games.

Q. You made a big change in your reps at inside linebacker, brought Cole in a lot more. How do you think that went? Do you anticipate doing something similar like that?

TERYL AUSTIN: It went good. I think Cole deserved it. He's been working his tail off to get back -- you guys notice I didn't curse there? He's worked his tail off to get back. He gives a different element. He's a downhill thumper, so it was good. We gave him an opportunity there.

We'll see how it goes with each opponent. Each opponent is a little bit different, and I think that will determine his role. I think he's earned a role to try to help us win, and I think he did a good job of that last week.

Q. You mentioned earlier about analytics on fourth and one. When did you notice that shifting where teams would go for it? Does that predate the tush push?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, it predates that. This has been in the works. It's been happening. You can see it. There's lots of people that -- this has been going on. I would say, shoot, I don't want to put a number on it, but it's been at least four or five years minimum that people have been getting at it. It's just now it's more league-wide, I guess, is the biggest thing.

There were a few teams that did it. Everybody knew when Cleveland did it. I think it was back in '14 when they went to the big analytic push, and Jacksonville has been in it and other teams have been in it.

I think now that it's league-wide, it's getting a lot more notice. There's other teams that have been doing this for a while.

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