

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Arthur Smith

Weekday Press Conference



Q. Art, would you say that the offensive line is more comfortable, more confident, and is Broderick Jones maybe an example?

ARTHUR SMITH: I think the whole group. It's as you continue to build, and like I said we have a lot of young guys up there with the exception of Isaac. For those guys the chemistry is important, and the more reps they get together and obviously the success that they have, you know, helps in their development.

You have success, it should build your confidence. Those guys have done a good job every week getting better, and going to continue that Thursday night.

Q. ...four tight ends. Been working really well for you. What are some of the challenges in trying to get different guys that have different body styles involved and how does that process play out?

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, you know, a lot of those guys, they all -- like you said, they have different skillsets, and sometimes you're trying to play to your strengths, certain things. Depends on who is up. How many wideouts you have up can impact that as well. We have some unique chess pieces, guys that can play in the core, guy that can play out in space.

You know, the difference is the game plans. The last two weeks we -- but it's credit to our players. We played some really good defenses with good fronts. Played a little bit different technique-wise and style. Those guys have done a good job.

You throw Spence into the mix and he's done a nice job in that really. It's all logistics, stuff we been training since the spring and how you build it. If you're just static, you can't play that way in terms of -- you're wasting time in spring or in Latrobe.

Those guys have done a fantastic job. They really did. I mean, going from what we attacked Minnesota and then

very different defense in Cleveland, another good defense; thought they did a nice job.

Q. You mentioned some of the unique skillset. How rare is it to have a guy like Darnell that's the size he is that can still move in space?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, it's hard to find a comp. He continues to get better. It's really cool to see his growth and development.

Sometimes when you are looking at the film and he's in his stance, he looks bigger than Troy or Roderick and then you put Spence and him together it's unique and it's good to see. A lot of these guys, we have a good group of unselfish guys.

It certainly helps when you're winning, but we have to continue to improve. We have a lot of work. We know that just because we won a game, that whole journey is about constant improvement and then focusing on that.

Q. ...targeted about once a game the first two years. He's on the field much more now. Is he just more comfortable or are you leaning into him more?

ARTHUR SMITH: It's a combination. There is a lot of different factors. You know, obviously the evolution of when I got here and we have a completely different group of skill players, played with multiple quarterbacks. There is a lot of things.

I don't think Aaron gets enough credit. A lot of stuff he does under center. He has been such a prolific drop back player. He can still move. You're seeing a lot of the movements and we're changing launch points and him getting out in space. Credit to him, the way he throws and the throws he can make on the run. Those aren't easy.

The one to Connor the other day. A lot of our players, sometimes guys have success in this league, I mean, that position, the tight end position, there is so many nuances depending how you use it. The stress we put on our tight ends to play the core, you have to be able to make a lot of the tackle combination blocks, and then just the route running and different -- depending on their background.

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You would like to see that from all your players. When you invest in guys -- I mean, you look at the O-line and guys like Calvin, it's unfortunate that he had a minor setback in his growth and development. Or the young guys. And at that position, I can go back and if you look at Jonnu, because I had him his first couple years, a leap he really made in year three, year four, I think you're seeing a lot of that from Darnell as well.

Q. You said you've seen a lot of development from Darnell. What stands out to you the most from when you got here last year to what we see today?

ARTHUR SMITH: I mean, just the subtle stuff with the footwork, hand placement. Sometimes when you're the biggest, strongest guy out there in high school, depending what they ask you to do, or college, I mean those are games within the games.

Every snap you're going against really good players. It's not just about brute force sometimes because the guys are so good with their hands, you know, just the leverage and subtle nuances. The picture changes, a guy moves inside; the footwork you have to take and make those in the split second. You package plays and you're thinking one thing.

I don't think these guys get enough credit for a lot of things they're asked to do and how smart our guys are. Those little subtle technique things.

Q. You mentioned guys have been unselfish. Is that individuals? How does that breed within -- I'm sure everybody wants more carries and catches.

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, sure. You never have a problem with somebody that wants the ball. You want people that want to work. I would have a problem if somebody didn't want the ball or didn't want to work.

It plays out as the season goes along. We've had some games where, like I said, depending on how -- the flow of the game, everybody would love to have ten plus catches, 25, 30 carries. When you get a group like this, certainly helps when you're winning, but it's really the makeup of the group and the character.

As we continue to go we need to continue to improve. Winning helps and we need to get more opportunities and then the ball spreads around. Naturally see guys like DK will have a large target share, but these guys get excited when other guys have success, guys that you're asking to do some dirt work jobs. It's cool to watch the reaction.

These are the things you can't make up and how excited

people were for Connor, those little things like that. Certainly helps when we're winning, but we got to continue that.

Q. What's the next step for the passing game? Where would you like to see it develop?

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, it's the whole offense. Some weeks it may be the game plan or the situation changes or you get behind and have to play a little more up-tempo and a little more drop back, numbers can be skewed. It's just every week. Like last week, we got a lot more single high in a group that's been difficult to -- for people to run against.

There is things we attacked differently in Minnesota that was good to see in terms of nuance, game plan. Got some one-on-ones outside. We had a couple shots; none of them hit and that's okay, you got to try them.

But, again, it's just the constant improvement. Like we get in the game Thursday night game, the situation can change. We have our plan of attack and there is opportunities -- and it goes back to this: What's your focus? It goes back to this the small details and nuance, the right spacing and zones, and then certainly man to man, when you get those in obvious passing downs.

Q. Had a lot of success against the Bengals in the past. Do you take that into account when you're putting together...

ARTHUR SMITH: I think a lot of times there is a new defensive coordinator obviously. Al Golden was there before, but he has his own personality on that. Sometimes the personnel changes depending on the draft or whoever they sign in free agency. A lot of times when you're in a division you know a lot of the players. That helps.

But it's a different scheme. You know, Al Golden will call different than Lou did. So there is different challenges.

Q. As a playcaller, do you ever find yourself getting into a groove, just calling plays? Does that sometimes take a little while? You ever notice what I'm calling, I'm on my game?

ARTHUR SMITH: I don't know. I always think about the guys -- take a snap, and then that's why I appreciate the hell out of our players. A lot of times I think you're talking about getting into a flow. I think you feel that as a group or when things are in sync, especially with the quarterback. That's why it's so important, the time you spend getting to know them and how they think. It's a shared accountability and experience. Certainly feel it at times when you're



rolling and in the flow.

But I don't sit there and look at the game like I'm plague Madden or playing like I'm Alexander the Great. I appreciate what those guys do. It's about those guys and we got a good group.

Q. How important was the first play? Is there a fear that if you keep doing the jumbo package you're telegraphing you're running. So to be able to hit a big play the play of the game in that package, is that something important to do for the success of being able to run with it?

ARTHUR SMITH: It's not just that package. It's a lot of them. Those are the games within the games. Whether you're playing off tendencies, everybody has the same numbers. Sometimes you're in obvious run situations depending on it it's just expanding on that, our plan of attack. We had several passes when Spence was out there. Spence got into space on a check down. You know, when he's leading -- he was lead blocking out in space, you know, it wasn't just play-action. Some of them were, but that one he was out in space.

It was a drop back and then he was lead blocking for a check down. I think you saw Spence's athleticism there in space. Something we've been working on. There is new wrinkles every week, but like I said Spence is a unique weapon. We use everything we have at our disposal. Yeah, you be 100% wrong, I mean, goal line defense.

But like I said, see how the game goes Thursday night. We'll have different packages, but that certainly helped.

Q. During training camp you had Jonnu in the backfield sometimes; DK at fullback on Sunday. How does that help get the matchups you guys want?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, sometimes you're doing it to set something up, or if it you think it give you an advantage; may not have another play you get to this in game.

Again when you're playing a lot of single high sometimes it's as simple as trying to pull somebody out of the box.

We've had 'Nu in the backfield a couple times this year. He's done different things throughout our history together. Just gives you -- and then also builds off some of the things that Kenny G and Jalen can do in space, too. So as we keep building.

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