

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Teryl Austin

Weekday Press Conference



Q. When you look back at Thursday night's game, how significant were those two runs to start their drives, the 25 and 38 yarders? And were there more problems beyond that or just those two in particular that really set a tone?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, I think initially we got off to a good start and then you start the drives giving up big runs; kind of changes your mindset in that regard.

It was in my mind significant in terms of how I went about trying to call the game, and so we just -- you know, we know we have to be better in those areas because you look at the games that we haven't performed well in, we haven't performed well against the run. It carries over.

So that's been a big thing for us right now.

Q. How are you guys doing in press man and are you playing it as much as you thought you might?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, we're playing man, we're playing some aggressive coverage; sometimes we're not; a lot of it depends on situations.

But, again, I think we have to -- if we're playing press man there is a lot of combinations. We have to win at the line of scrimmage. Technique has to be good. Got to be able to affect the quarterback and then finish at the ball.

And so there is a lot of things that go into it, not just the guys out there covering. It's how they cover, how we rush, all those things. When we're up there we have to do -- we got to do a really good job, better job and be more technically sound that way.

Sometimes you're running against really good receivers, and when you're going against good receivers you have to be really good in all facets. Sometimes the ability component is equal and usually what you find out is sometimes who wins the battle technically is the guy that ends up having success on the down, you know,

throughout the course of the day.

Q. Is redirect the idea every time or sometimes you just want to get up there and run?

TERYL AUSTIN: There are different things in terms of techniques. There is not just one bump technique. But there is some things that go into how you do it. It's not just, hey, I go up and I have that guy and I got to win.

Q. TA, what, in your mind, just evaluating not just the Bengals game but over the course of the season, what do you guys have to do to become more consistent so that you aren't allowing a bunch of yards and then also like -- it seems like it's...

TERYL AUSTIN: We have to stop the run. I got a simple answer for you: We have to stop the run. When you allow teams to run then it opens up all kind of things. Opens up play-action pass, opens up or shrinks your menu. What you do now is you're doing things to make sure you have to bring possibly extra guys down to try to stop the run.

So the bottom line is we got to be able to stop the run, and then I think that opens up and allows us to play well.

Q. The scheme with the nickel front that includes two linebackers, is that stout enough to do what you're talking about?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yes, I think -- I don't think it's the front, whether we're in nickel or in our base front or whether -- whatever we're doing. You know, the thing is we have to be able to stop it. You see teams that throughout and because there is so much 11 personnel you see teams that play the whole game in nickel and don't care what it is and they're able to stop the run.

You know, we'll play it in our big package and our normal package and our nickel package and we have to be able to stop the run. I think we have the guys that do it. We just haven't gotten it done. But I haven't lost faith in that. I just know we have to continue to work. It's a long season. We'll keep pouring our efforts into being able to stop it and getting better at it.

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Q. On the note of stopping the run, we talked to a lot of guys this week and a lot of them pointed to Thursday's performance as just as guys missing assignments or not being in their gaps. In your experience, what causes those missed assignments?

TERYL AUSTIN: Sometimes what's causes it is guys are maybe trying to do too much, you know, make a play. And really what I found out in my years in this league is that when it happens, it kind of snowball in a sense of if I'm a guy and we had a play, something happened bad, next time that same play happens I'm going to try to do something else and maybe I become the culprit.

So that's really what it is. You know, we just got to make sure we stick to it, take care of our jobs, do our jobs as well as we can, and trust the man next to us is going to do it. And if it doesn't get done the first time, the next time that guy will get it right and I don't try to do too much.

Q. Mike was talking to us on Tuesday, and he was asked why didn't Herbig play more. His response was our inability to control the run and limiting one dimensional passing circumstances probably affected his participation.

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah.

Q. Two questions I got off that is: We had heard he was doing so much better against the run. Why that disconnect there? If they're running anyway, why not just put him in and see if he can do better?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, I think in that situation, yeah, Mike is right. We thought we would have in that regard more situational things for him to really rush and get after the passer.

Again, we do have to explore getting him in there more. That's just sometimes that happens during the course of the game. Kind of get thrown a loop and as you work through and work to the game, our biggest emphasis on game day is trying to win the game. Not determining how many plays a guy plays.

So we did that, and we'll go back and look at it and see if he -- next time maybe do a better job of that.

Q. Following up on that, on the last drive, what prevented -- what was the plan of not putting him in in that situation when it was pretty much a pass forward thing?

TERYL AUSTIN: I'm not sure it was a pass forward thing. I believe they had a timeout. They had over a minute something left. With the kicker they had -- they really only had to go about 25 or 30 yards to get to field goal range.

And so my thoughts and my thought process was, hey, let's play this thing stout. Let's get up on them and don't allow them to run and bleed the clock down. Then we just didn't hold up.

Q. When you're facing a veteran quarterback, what are some elements that go into a successful coverage disguise?

TERYL AUSTIN: Well, a lot of it is being able to hold your disguise when he gives a cadence or some things. You know, giving him some post-snap looks that are different.

So when he said hike, I take -- look down, catch the ball, hey, you're giving them something different. Again, it's always a work in progress. Sometimes you win those fights and sometimes you don't.

And last week we just didn't win it. I have confidence that we will come back and win. I think every time we've had a game that maybe we haven't played as well as we want our guys to really fight hard and try to bounce back and be better the next week, and I don't expect anything different.

Q. As a follow up to that, Jordan Love has had a pretty good year. What kind of challenge does he present this week?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think he does. He has a big arm. He has good mobility. He does a really good job in terms of when he gets out of there he can get out of the pocket. He can still launch the ball down the field. Knows who to get the ball to. He's done a good job.

They don't have a lot of turnovers. They take care of the ball. So that's a challenge he brings us. We just got to make sure, again, we try to get him off schedule so the play-action and things that he does and does well, you know, aren't as big a factor for us.

Q. Last three years it seemed like Minkah Fitzpatrick was the main guy that had your ear as the player to communicate to you as a coach, kind of keep a line of communication. Is there a player that's taken that role this year as being the main voice on the defensive roster that you talk to and go back and forth with?

TERYL AUSTIN: No, I don't think there is a main voice. We have a lot of good veteran leadership. I try to engage

with all of our guys because their areas are different. I probably talk to PQ more in terms of play call and me getting the play into him.

So PQ and I probably maybe talk a little bit more in terms of -- and it's more of, hey, here is what I'm thinking. This is how I'm thinking of calling this.

But as far as just, hey, one guy having my ear, I don't think that. I try to treat all our guys with the respect that they deserve because they have been playing in this league and we've got really good players and what are some of their concerns.

It's my job to make sure I listen to that, find out where we are, and go from there.

Q. What can you say about the developing relationship with Patrick as one of those primary guys that you talk to as you guys just go through game plan and adjustments?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, I think it's good. PQ is really smart, smart guy. Understands. He'll have some idea, good thoughts, good feedback. And that's really what you want. You have to have that.

That's when you're talking to anybody. You want feedback. You want to talk. You want to have a conversation. You don't want it to be one-sided. So he's really good at that.

Q. Teryl, it's been a pretty clean year for Joey up until last Thursday. Was that a one off? Are you still seeing improvement from that standpoint?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, I mean, obviously they're down from where we were last year, so that is an improvement. It has to continue to develop and stay in that direction.

And then really that -- the way it does that is how you work at practice, how you get those things, how you strain and do the things at practice, because that carries over into the field.

So obviously must be working pretty good at practice because those are down and we just need to see that and hopefully he'll continue to improve and keep going and help us.

Q. You use a dime defense more in the past than this year.

TERYL AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

Q. Why is that down this year, and what is going into the decision to use more nickel and base and way less dime than you have before?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think part of it is Peyton Wilson gives us an opportunity in terms of being able to play nickel. He's fast enough to cover tight ends, athletic enough to do all those things, and it gives us -- obviously if we want to blitz he gives us a bigger body in terms of blitzes.

That's probably why I'm playing more nickel than maybe say dime, more nickel than in the past.

Q. Going back to the DBs, they get cut up pretty bad on Thursday. Is this kind of where you saw that group at this point in the season? Darius Slay, too, he has gotten beat quite a few teams.

TERYL AUSTIN: Obviously I thought, we all thought, we would be better. I understand it's the NFL. I know these guys are pros and I know they'll bounce back because their pedigree tells me the way they work; their mindset tells me they're going to bounce back.

You know, the nice thing I know for me is it's a long season. We have seen these guys. They have a track record of playing well and playing over the long haul. To me, it's just a matter of us continuing to work at it and eventually they'll get into their groove and start playing the type of football overall that we want more consistent.

Q. How do you balance as a playcaller when you're designing disguises to show different things? For example, not lining up with a traditional inside leverage alignment to show that you're in man. If the disguises aren't working or sticking to the disguises, how do you balance, hey, we're going chuck that out and be more front so that our pass rusher...

TERYL AUSTIN: I think it's like anything, you do evaluations and you see are we giving them something impossible to do. Is it something we can do that we just got to do better. You go back and look at it and decide what you wanted to do. That is always the never ending thing. You're always working, always trying to figure out a way to do it.

I don't think you ever abandon anything in this league. You may put it on the back burner and come back to it but I think there are some core things that you always have to work at. And being able to disguise and give people different looks to create some indecision in quarterbacks in the throwing game pass game, have to do that. You can never tire from a that because that's -- if you tire from that you might as well give up and tell them what you're doing

every time.

Q. Wilson, you mentioned him. Can you talk about his growth in year two? Where is the potential growth going forward?

TERYL AUSTIN: He's done great. I think the thing that I see for him is he's a lot more confident in terms of articulating what's going on. Last year he was a guy that had a lot of questions. Not that he doesn't have questions now but like he really in terms of how he's grown as a football player and understanding the NFL game, I think he's doing a great job of that.

We have seen growth in him in terms of obviously playing and his ability to make plays. I think the biggest thing, again, for him moving forward is always going to be the block capability because he's a run-and-hit guy, and sometimes they'll scheme you up where you got to be able to defeat a block and get off. That's an area he's gotten better, but we still need him to be better.

But I really love the kid. I love how he works. I love how he plays. You know, he epitomizes what it means to be a Steeler. He plays hard and fast and loves the game.

Q. ... more or less than seasons past so far from what you've seen?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think it's still the same because they -- people know that TJ can still wreck a game. So they're not going to allow him to rush. There will be times he gets one-on-ones and sometimes ball is out before he can get an opportunity to get there because the ball is out quick.

You know, there is times you see him and he's right there at the quarterback. You know, I think, again, and I think I've stood up here and said it before, all that rushing coverage works together, and so for our rush to be really good our coverage has to be really good and get the quarterback off the first look, first key, and have him hold the ball.

You know, we like to say it, there is not going to be many times you just run by a guy in this league. These guys all pro and you're going to have to work to win. So it becomes a unit task to be able to sack the quarterback, cover him, get interceptions. Everybody has to be working together.

Q. How have you seen Love handle pressure? Does he get rattled?

TERYL AUSTIN: I don't know enough about him in terms of seeing him a lot in terms of if he gets rattled with pressure. There has been some people that have been

able to put some pressure on him and collapse the pocket on him and do that stuff.

And so we're going to -- that is our goal. Our goal is to collapse the pocket, put some pressure on him, make him make some bad throws. One thing I will say: He's been escaping and he hasn't made a whole bunch of bad throws where he turned the ball over, so we just got to work to get that done and we know it's not going to be easy.

That's what we have to try to do.

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