

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Teryl Austin

Weekday Press Conference



TERYL AUSTIN: All right.

Q. To start, hold number three, did that set a defensive tone for you?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, I thought our guys came out, played with good energy. We gave up the big play early and then we settled in and didn't let them get in the end zone.

So I thought that was a good start. I think coupled with the offense's fast start that gave us really good momentum heading into -- for the rest of the game.

Q. Teryl, from what you've seen, I don't know how far back you went but how much have the Dolphins changed? Early in the year Tua had the ball in his hands a lot; now these last four games they are running the ball.

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, I think the biggest thing is they're running the ball really effectively. They have a ton the explosive runs. They have good running backs and obviously Achane can take that thing the whole way. He's fast, elusive, all the things you want in a good back.

And so I think that's -- you know, that gives them success and it buys into the play-action and all the different things they do when he wants to get the ball downfield to Waddle and those things.

Q. Harmon was talking about how their center is 6'1", 290; he is really good about getting to the second level, creating things that way. The other offensive linemen I know they're bigger, but are they mobile, too?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, the whole line is athletic, but he stands out with his quickness and the way he can get through and create creases, get up on the second level, get outside and pull. He does so many different things.

But as a unit they are very athletic. You know, they run a lot of -- they have some perimeter schemes and they get those guys out and they get bigs on little people, and when you get bigs on little people out in space and they can create seams for the runners, that's good business for them.

That's why they're rushing the ball so well.

Q. Is that significantly different from what Buffalo and the Ravens tried to do?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, it's a different scheme, different ways they want to achieve the same result. They want to get bigs out blocking littles or get their back on a little guy outside.

So the end result, what they're searching for, is getting their running back out on the smaller guy or getting a big to block a smaller guy out on the perimeter. They're achieving it different ways, but they are both achieving it.

Q. Along those lines, how do you evaluate the way that the smaller guys like Joey Porter, Jr., some of the other corners, defensive backs and...

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, I mean, the thing is, I'm not sure we've -- you know, I'm not going to say we were tackling awful. I just didn't think sometimes the cracker plays in terms of angles and where we were going, so all of a sudden we're missed, chasing guys, we're not attacking them with the right angles.

But I didn't feel guys not wanting to tackle, tackling poorly. I think how we got to the tackle took too long and wasn't good enough.

Q. What are you seeing with this defense that is inconsistent with stopping the run?

TERYL AUSTIN: Say that again.

Q. What are you seeing with this defense that causes the inconsistency with stopping the run?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, a human game. Sometimes when



you get there and guys get different angles and certain things happen there are going to be some errors involved.

You know, some of those things happen. Just our goal is to try to limit it, and obviously we want to eliminate it all, but I don't think that's going to happen in the sense of because it's a human game and different things happen. I just think that we just have to be more consistent.

I thought -- just pointing out last week, I thought overall we gave up two big runs but other than that, I thought we had a pretty good control on the run game. You know, our goal was to knock those other two -- those two explosive runs out of the thing. If we eliminate that, then, you know, we can look back and say we had a good day's work.

That's the thing that goes in every week. I don't think there is any -- in terms of one thing that makes it inconsistent. I just think that it's a human game and sometimes guys one week make the same play they don't make the next week.

Just kind of happens that way.

Q. ... ability to run the perimeter. Derrick Harmon also talked about that when we spoke to him this morning. What's the challenge for you guys to work out there, especially when it comes to corners and how they support and apply themselves to the interior work when they try to stretch you guys out so much?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think part of the issue is when I first got in the league and when you had those type of situations, the perimeter guys had a chance against the big guys. They could come cut them and set an edge that way.

Once they took that ability away, the mismatch moves in favor the offensive linemen. So really it comes down to trying to make sure your edge guys really hold that and knock people back and that they don't get clean runs at the smaller guys.

I mean, that's really what it comes down to. So we have to try to make sure I get our guys in schemes where if they have to come support, which they will, we can kind of close the space and make sure the space isn't so big.

Q. TA, you've had some games this year where you've given up yards and splashed, but were able to close it in the end, last possession stops.

TERYL AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

Q. What changes...

TERYL AUSTIN: I just think it's the mentality of our

players. We all know it's a 60-minute game. We know things don't always go the way you want them, the way you draw them up, the way you talk about them in practice.

But if you play hard and do things right, if you can play really well in crunch time, you'll have an opportunity to win the game. That's really what our guys do.

I know, our guys don't -- they don't fear those situations. They don't fear those times in the game when the pressure is the most, and I think that's why we been able to be successful in some of those situations.

Q. (Regarding Jaylen making an impact outside of forcing turnovers.)

TERYL AUSTIN: I think he's made an impact for us because he's steadied us in terms of the safety position, being able to be there and communication and getting all that stuff together. You know, you hear it from one voice. I think when we were kind of moving around earlier in the year kind of got a little disjointed, but I think that's kind of smoothed out and I like the direction we are going that way.

You know, I see less guys like wondering what's going on. Hey, where is the call? Who is making this call? I see more of, okay, here is what we got; let's move.

Q. TA, is there anything specific that you've seen from Joey this year that's really kind of stood out to you? (No microphone.)

TERYL AUSTIN: I think you get in your third year and you start to develop a feel for the game, start to know what works for you, and sometimes knowing what your faults are and trying to stay away from those.

I think he's done a better job during the course of the week as you grow in preparing and what you need to do to get yourself ready for games. I think that's why you probably seen a little uptick in his coverage.

I know he had a couple penalties last week, but you don't see as many as you had in the past. So I think that's all part of the growth process with him.

Q. When he's been healthy what kind of impact has Harmon made on the defense and what would it mean to get him back for this game?

TERYL AUSTIN: Well, you're talking about a talented guy. We all -- obviously that's why we drafted him in the first round. He's been what we expected. You're talking about a big guy that's good with his hands. Can move. Can

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

shed. Can get to things. That's why he helps with the run game the way he does. Talent.

Obviously love to have him back this week, but we'll see how he gets through the week and we'll make the call or determination as we get closer to the game.

Q. I know it's not your focal point personally, but what's it been like to see what Miami has done with Minkah after having coached him the last couple years?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think it's great. Minkah is one of my favorite guys. Glad to see him down there having some success, doing what he does. And so I just -- I think it's awesome. He's playing a little bit of nickel, which is what he did a whole bunch of in college, and seeing him get back to that stuff and getting around the ball, it's all good stuff.

Shoot, I only wish that guy the best because he's -- he was great when he was here. Always great when he was here as a human. Forget football player, but just as a human. And so I root for guys like Minkah. You know, he's not here but I root for him -- except for this week. (Laughter.)

Q. What sets him apart from some of his contemporaries?

TERYL AUSTIN: Minkah, I mean, we talked about that when he was here. He's unbelievable. Really smart. Really tough. Got a nose for the ball. Makes the guys around him better. Really good communicator. All the good things.

I mean, just can't say enough good things about him. That's what really kind of sets those guys apart and why he's been a Pro Bowl player for so many years and done the things he's done for so many years.

Q. It's been a disjointed season for Alex with the different injuries he's dealt with. What kind of impact has he had?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, when he's healthy, boy, he's good. I thought he was really good last week. Obviously everybody remembers the sack to end the game, but the dirty work stuff he did all game in terms of setting the edges and really being physical at the point of attack, that is the stuff that he really brings.

Really just the biggest thing for him is to stay healthy. When he stays healthy that's the kind of player he is. Hopefully -- knock on a little bit of wood -- we'll keep him healthy for the rest of the year and that will be a really good

thing for us.

Q. He slipped into the slot corner role; Jaylen flipped into the free safety role.

TERYL AUSTIN: Who are we talking about?

Q. Sorry, Minkah flipped into the slot corner role for the Dolphins after playing safety with you guys. Jaylen, he's flipped into a safety role for you guys after starting out a slot corner. How did Jaylen respond to that challenge? How have you seen him not just initially, but week to week just saying, hey, this is a whole new thing he's had to learn and adapt to what you guys want to do?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, he responded great because he saw what was going on and how it kind of -- in terms of the continuity and the things that need to be done back there, because you're dealing with four or five guys at a time all the time.

When he made the move he was all in and he's been really good in terms of smoothing that transition over for him. He's grown, because the game looks different when you play it from safety than when you play it outside or in slot.

So he's done a good job in terms of that. He gets better every week because he is seeing more, and that's what I think -- good football players see stuff, after they see it a few times, all of a sudden you'll start to see some really good things happen.

I think that's what's happening with him.

Q. From a coaching standpoint, is there a sense of irony that you guys traded away Minkah from free safety and now he's in slot corner. You guys traded for Jaylen, started in slot corner, now he's at free safety and just how sometimes that works?

TERYL AUSTIN: No, I never thought about it. I just kind of think about my situation. I really didn't give it much thought. Just, hey, what are we doing in our season to try to get our season together.

I can't worry about, well, he's down there doing the same thing. So I just look at what we got to do and I go from it there.

Q. TA, how do you think Cam did dropping in the coverage late in the game?

TERYL AUSTIN: You like that? I know you did. I did. It was good. It was a heck of a call by PQ, so it was really



good.

I think we been doing some stuff like that mostly in practice, and it's one of those things that you got to pull out sometimes when people are least expecting it.

I'm sure that was something that he weren't expecting because they haven't seen it on tape from us in, I don't know, I've been here seven years so we'll say seven years.

Q. What kind of challenge does Tua present to you this week?

TERYL AUSTIN: He's really accurate. He gets rid of the ball fast. He's a good processor. He sees what's going on. So that's the challenge. And he gets the ball to the right guys. He knows where to go with the ball. He gets it out fast. So you don't see much negativity from him. That's really the thing that goes on.

They have been taking care of the ball like crazy last five or six weeks, which is why they're winning and winning big.

So that's the big challenge for us. We got to figure out a way to get him to hold the ball, figure out a way to get him to turn the ball over.

Q. TA, you've been coaching a long time. You've been around teams that have seasons get away from them, things spiral out of control. You mentioned you've been here seven years. Lots of different types of seasons in that span. Why do you think the guys never let go of the rope?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think that's part of -- and this has nothing to do with me. It has everything to do with this building and the culture that's been built around here for a long time. Obviously Mike has been here a long time.

But that's the culture around here where guys -- you know, it's a team thing. You're always playing for the team. You do the best you can. I think that's why guys hold the rope and they stay on it. They don't fall into -- you know it's easy when -- if you lose a few games or do something to fall into selfish cliques and do stuff like that, and our guys don't do that. Our guys don't do that. Our guys just figure out, hey, how can we work hard to figure out a way to get us out of this rut and keep moving forward.

It's a testament to the building, a testament to the guys that play the game, our players that have been here past and present.

Q. How much is Mike part of that, part of setting that standard?

TERYL AUSTIN: That's one of the things I think -- one of the things that I think Mike is elite at. He's obviously an unbelievable coach, but in terms of team building and culture building, he does that as well as anybody I've ever been around in terms of, hey, here is what we're building, here is why we're building it, and here is how we're going to build it.

It's not a one-time thing and then you talk about it in three months. That's around here daily in different ways. He presents it in different ways. That's one of the things that is -- that he does is that is far and above what maybe the average coach could do.

Q. (Regarding Yahya playing a lot more.) How do you evaluate those snaps, and how has he taken on this bigger role with Harmon out?

TERYL AUSTIN: Yeah, he's good. I tell you, he is a big who loves to run. When I say big, you guys know he's big. But he is -- for a big guy, he can run all day. I thought he handled it well. He had one nice play I think going into the red zone where Derrick looked like he was going to bounce it out and he ran into Yahya and Yahya was able to hold on and knock him down. He's done some things like that. He's big, strong individual who I think is just getting better. Kind of just scratching the surface of the kind of player he's going to be.

And so he really responded well to that, and we'll just keep moving forward with it. I think he's done a good job and he's deserved and earned the opportunity to play more.

Q. Seventh time you guys have played a top 10 rushing offense in the NFL. Next week will be the eighth with the Lions. What have you guys learned from playing so many really good teams at running the football that you guys are able to apply down this home stretch of the season?

TERYL AUSTIN: I think the biggest thing you learn is with all of these really good run teams, you have got to limit the explosive plays. How do you do that; that's the number one thing you do. Because if they're able to get explosive plays, that's when the yards go up and the field flips and they gain control of the game.

To me they're all going to have their different schemes, different runners, different way they get to it. I think the biggest thing you do is you try to find out, hey, what are their big runs? Where are they getting their big runs, and try to eliminate them getting them that way.

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