

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Aaron Rodgers

Postgame Press Conference



Steelers 26, Ravens 24

Q. Aaron, for you being back in the playoffs for the first time since 2021, walk us through the emotions you're feeling right now.

AARON RODGERS: Yeah, a lot of gratitude for the journey. You know, every season is different. Has its challenges, adversity. We haven't made it easy on ourselves really the second -- really all season I guess.

But I'm proud of our guys. You know, from really the quasi two-minute drive at the end of the first half through the second half we played really good ball] on offense, so I'm proud of the way we responded multiple times after they took the lead.

It just takes a little belief at this point in the season. There are 14 teams that will be left. 18 will be planning their offseason. It's good to be part of the 14 after so many years -- '22 we lost the last game to make the playoffs; '23 I was out; '24 we were terrible, so nice to be back in this position.

Q. Calvin, talk about what you saw.

AARON RODGERS: Calvin is the sweetest guy. Every since the Malibu trip in the offseason I have such a love and appreciation for Cal and his disposition. Multiple times in the huddle I'm asking him on various plays, what do you want on the backside, what do you want on the backside? He wouldn't give me a straight answer.

And on this particular huddle conversation I said. What do you want, Cal? I said -- and somebody to my right, I don't know if it was McCormick or Pat said just go cook 'em or something. I said, all right, Cal, you run a hitch-and-go back there. I was really thinking the front side three-man combination that we worked and had success with most of the night was kind of my first thought.

I peeked back to the left and saw No. 3 slip, and that's a

gimme touchdown. I'm proud of Calvin and the line really gave me a lot of time all day. They played really well.

Q. What does it say about this passing offense that guys make big plays in a big game without DK Metcalf?

AARON RODGERS: We got a lot of talented guys, capable guys. Proud of the way we responded. There are some things that happened in the game that we been trying to get to the entire season that hadn't really showed up. Like Pat on the second to last drive. Had a big double-up stutter down the middle completion. We been talking about that thing since Latrobe and haven't really had a lot of opportunities.

But he ran just an absolute beautiful route that kind of set us up. Then we had the craziness with the helmet conking out and the personnel groupings we had on the field and the wristband. I mean, it was chaos. We got to a good call there on third down to run it in and then the two-minute drive to start off with a nice quick game completion.

I thought we were efficient and had a chance on third down to go to Cal and he ran and good route and we made it happen.

Q. What was going on in that goal to go with the timeout?

AARON RODGERS: I couldn't hear anything. In that situation you can -- because the personnel we had on the field, big personnel, there is not a whole lot plays we can get to that I can just call kind off the cuff. We did it on the one, and I was thinking, this is way too important. We're down by four points. We need a touchdown here. Who cares about the timeouts at this point.

I couldn't believe when we got the replacement helmet that that one didn't worth either. I mean, poor Derrick who is the absolute best handling helmets on the sideline. We were trying to figure it out.

You know, we got to a good call in that third down play we been working on; Kenny ran in; Mason had a really nice block. Thankfully we didn't need the helmet on the last



drive. Then it was back to normal a little bit.

Q. What was Derrick trying to give you?

AARON RODGERS: There is a wristband. I've been -- most of my career anti-wristband. Mike McCarthy was anti-wristband. Matt LeFleur has the longest play calls in the league - Mike McDaniel actually probably does, but Matt had some long ones. So I've been wearing it this year, but Mason likes to have the wristband on the sideline. He threw it out to me and I thought the backup helmet would work so I threw it back and ran out there and the backup helmet wasn't working, so we are in some communication issues.

Q. How would you describe how your teammates handled that moment?

AARON RODGERS: Which one?

Q. The end of the game, the last drive.

AARON RODGERS: It was good. I mean, we talked. We had 2:20 to start and no timeouts. I said, let's try and finish the game with -- let's run it down there and score with not much time left.

So the reminder is always in that situation yards over time until you get to a minute. And, you know, called kind of a slant on the backside. Had three-man combination away. Calvin made a nice catch and run. Let it go to two minute, and then we had some efficient passes. Looked like there might have been a hold on the second down, but we came back and converted on third down and it was kind of pandemonium, but we still had time on the clock.

Lamar was making some wild plays tonight, which you expect because he is such a talented player. He's going to be a gold jacket when it's all said and done.

I'm glad they missed that last one.

Q. You talk about not making it easier on yourself over the course of the season. This team has dealt with a lot of adversity; shown a lot of the resilience. Where do you feel like that's come from, that you guys always seem to get back up off the mat?

AARON RODGERS: I think there is a lot of belief in the leadership of the team. I think there an important part of a leadership role is being as even keel as possible and always believing you got a chance. But it takes moments like this. Back in 2010 we were 9-6 six playing Chicago last game of the year and we eked out a close one the fourth quarter 10-3.

It gave us a little bit of belief, and then we went on a run where we were underdogs I believe the entire playoffs. We were underdogs tonight at home against our division rival. It's going to give us some belief.

Now we're playing I believe the Texans. They're coming off nine in a row I think. Who knows if they'll make us an underdog again at home, but the belief level in the locker room after a win like this is exponentially greater, which is what you want to have going into next week. And then obviously we get DK back.

Q. Aaron, Patrick Queen said he didn't watch the last field goal attempt. That he just stared straight ahead. Did you watch the last field goal?

AARON RODGERS: Of course. I watched it.

Q. What was going through your mind?

AARON RODGERS: A lot of emotions. Couldn't believe we were in that position. Hope he doesn't make it. You know, it's always kind of you watch the kicker -- I was watching Ben too because he was trying to block it. You know, you're watching the kicker and the ball just seemed to be heading right to start, so it's chaos, disbelief, gratitude, a lot of emotions.

Just really thankful. That's what I told Mr. Rooney and Andy and Omar. Just to be able to get brought in and be a part of this team, just the way I bonded with the guys and the way they have put their arms around me and allowed me to be myself and listen to me and let me lead and inspire me the way they have, it's a good group of guys.

Q. Patt Freiermuth hasn't gotten the bulk of targets this year, but he continues to come up in big moments for you guys? What can you say about his focus to be there when you need him especially in those huge moments today?

AARON RODGERS: I have a lot of respect for Pat first and foremost, the way he's handled himself this entire season. He's a dynamic player. With the emergence of Darnell and the big personnel that we've done he hasn't had as many snaps as he's used to or would've wanted. Not one time this entire year -- and he's my locker mate so I can say this with absolute confidence and 100% honesty, not one time did I hear him complain about his snap count, about anything.

There is a lot to be said for that. I think that's a lost part of this league, to be able to humble yourself and lean into the collective instead of making it about yourself week in and

week out when he knows he can play. He made plays last week in the two-minute and he made plays in the fourth quarter, really all game.

I thought we did a good job. Just little things you talk about in Latrobe and you hope show up. Third and ten, we went on a first sound -- a center snap by Zach. Just goes up, waits, and snaps it. They bring strong dog. They bring the Mike and they bring 44 off the slot. We talked from day one when I got here. I like throwing vertical peeks versus pressure, so start off by looking vertical.

We actually made eye contact in the huddle. Just said, be alert. Sure enough, he widens slightly like he supposed to, catches the ball with his hands, gets 14 yards, and that's a drive continuer. We talked, if you get two-man, double up, take your time, give him an out break look, and then go down the middle.

On the second to last drive he ran an absolutely unbelievable route and it was just perfect. I mean, I'm literally throwing it kind of laughing to myself because I'm like, this is it. See, I've been talking about this forever.

But I'm just really proud of him. I can't say enough good things about Pat. He's an exceptional human and great teammate and there is a lot to be said for that in this league.

Q. What did you see on the touchdown pass to Austin, and how important was it to have him back?

AARON RODGERS: It was good to have Cal back. Cal is a great player. He's one of the sweetest guys on the team and just a guy who really wants to do right all the time.

I was saying earlier, trying to get him to give me some confidence on what he wanted on the backside, and he finally -- on that one he did it again. He wouldn't kind of put a stamp one something, so I said all right, hitch and go. He ran a good route.

There were other plays he made today that were instinctive and some show up in the stat box and some don't, but really proud of all our guys and excited to get DK back.

Q. You mentioned belief before. You talked to the guys this week. A lot of people thought that even though you were shorthanded a little bit you could help elevate guys around you. When so many people are counting on you to deliver like that, does that part still resonate with you at this point in your career?

AARON RODGERS: Yeah, that's what you want. You want the ball in your hands with 2:20 left and you get a

touchdown. That's exactly what you want. I was calm all day long with the gravity of the game and knowing what was in store for us.

But I was confident that I was going to play a good game and that I could kind of be the magnetic force out there to keep guys confident and calm. Even in the two minute, we're good. We're going to go down and score, and don't worry about it, boys. That's part of it being the old guy, having a lot of gray in your beard. They expect things from you, and it's nice to be able to deliver in moments like that.

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