

October 2, 2025

Defensive Coordinator Joe Whitt Jr.

Opening Statement:

“All right, let's get going. So, as normal, I'll talk a little bit about the last game, a little bit about the first quarter of the season and then get into the next game and then answer any questions that you have. The first quarter, it hasn't been consistent. We go out and play well against the [New York] Giants, then we don't play well against the [Green Bay] Packers. I'm talking about defensively. Come out and run and hit and do what we need to do against the [Las Vegas] Raiders. And then we go down to Atlanta [Falcons] and once again, so we can't have these ebbs and flow. We have to get into a rhythm of playing as one. And that's what I told the team. Okay. And when I say playing as one, what do I mean by that? It's three different things. Especially coming from the Atlanta game. The number one thing is the communication. Okay. Pre and post snap. We don't need anybody to put capes on. That's what happened a little bit in Atlanta game, and I will explain that. And then the game tackling, tackling as a unit, the turnbacks that we talked about that we had. Number of them against the Raiders. We didn't have them in this game and we missed tackles. And so, when I talk about the communication and playing as one and no capes let's talk about like the first third down of the game. It's a look that we knew that was coming. It is actually the play that we worked. They ran the play that we worked, we call them looks to own. And so they ran the fast motion over option away from three with a seven. And we had one guy that got a little greedy and, but it wasn't his play to make, he should have been on the vertical and the vertical was open. And so, we don't need anybody to put capes on. Alright. That play was for Uce [LB Frankie Luvu] to make and Uce was working to it, but the wide, it was wide open. So, the communication and understanding, we don't have to put a cape on that. You just do your job. The game tackling, right? One of the touchdowns by [Atlanta Falcons RB] Bijan [Robinson], okay? If you look at that play right there, we had one guy come in and he shot at the ball trying to knock the ball out. But our rule is you shoot at the ball when it's in the leverage arm that you're at. Okay? And so, then the second guy came in and he shot at the ball. You only if you're the second guy in, you shoot at the ball when the tackle is secure. So, the technique of both of those wasn't there. And so, it allowed maybe Bijan to keep running. It caused two missed tackles and a third while as he went into the end zone. And so, communication pre and post snap and then we don't have to put capes on just do our job. And so, the negative plays and the open plays are, are putting a stain on the positive things that they have, we have done on defense. But the main thing is the win. And we are not winning and we're not, well, we didn't win the last game and we're not playing the brand of football that we want to play defensively. And so, we have to get that taken care of, and we will.”

On the intentions of defending the 26-yard play with Atlanta Falcons TE Kyle Pitts Sr.:

“They were both trying to get where the ball was supposed to go, and he just looked up and saw the guy running open and hit him.”

On miscommunication and trying to correct mistakes:

“Well, the no capes says everybody's talking about turnovers trying to force it. So even though [CB] Marshon's [Lattimore] with the double move, alright, just leveraging, don't get your back to the quarterback, leverage the route, alright? And play it through right turnovers, I've had a history of getting a bunch of them in my past and they don't, they don't come on good thrown balls, they come on poorly thrown balls, they come on running tips and overthrows and things such as that. You can't go out there and just necessarily force them to happen. You don't have to put a cape on, you know. But when you do have the opportunity. We had one taken away from a penalty in the first game when [S] Quan [Martin] got one and got hit, then we dropped one in the Raiders game with, with two-three [CB Trey Amos]. So, they're going to come, but if we try to force them and we try to go get them and we're not doing it the right way, we're going to give an explosive and we can't do it that way.”

On Luvu's run game and pass rushing performance:

“Frankie, he looked pretty impactful in the run game. So, Frankie played really well. He's the one guy that played well in this game. Yeah, the numbers are there. He's rushed more than any off the ball linebacker in the league. They're doing different things against him and that's why [LB] Bobby's [Wagner] getting the success that he's getting and [DE Dorance] DA's [Armstrong] getting some of the, so they're, like I said, they're focusing more on him and that's good. You know what I'm saying? His time's going to come, his sacks are going to come with, when they start putting attention on other players. So, but he was the one guy in that game that ran and hit and played the way that all 11 should have played.”

On the need to get more big plays and sacks in the running game:

“Well, we always want sacks. I think what we have 10 right now. I don't know where that that puts us. And so, we are pressuring them and we're putting a wave. I thought, not necessarily this game, but the game before we had opportunities where we had a hand on the quarterback three different times and we, he got away. I think we'll have to just finish those types of plays. But to answer your question, I mean, it's just, we, we have the guys to do it we just have to complete the play and make sure that it's rushing coverage that the back end is covering so those guys can get to their second rush.”

On getting off to a faster start on defense:

“You know, getting off on third down, that first third down would've been a huge play for us because we got him to the situation. We got them to the, that third and five we talked about, that's the play we talked about that we were going to get. And so now when you make that play and you get off the field and you get the ball to the offense and it's the first plays a three and out, that's the energy that that creates throughout the stadium. But when you give up an explosive, now you're giving them energy to go. And so, we can't allow them, we can't be good on first down, second down and get the third down in that situation and know what's coming and allow explosive, and that's where we drain ourselves and give the other team energy.”

On the little details that will improve the defense:

“Well, and that goes back to, like I said, the pre and post now communication and the no capes. Okay. So, I went back, and I showed them the first four plays of the Giants game. Okay. And, you know, you had [DT Javon] Kinlaw's tackle, you had [DT Daron] Payne coming out on the screen. Then the fourth play was, they ran fast motion you and you saw [CB Mike] Mikey [Sainristil] communicating before the snap you saw [S] Will [Harris] on the backside communicating and

coming out. So, pre-snap communication provides great post snap play, and we didn't have enough of that here. It seemed like we were playing more as individuals than as a collective unit in the last game. And so, we have to get back to playing like we did, communicating like we did. And when, when we do that, it provides better play for the whole defense.”

On what he saw on Wagner’s play trailing on Atlanta Falcons RB Bijan Robinson:

“Yeah. As much as possible we try to keep our backers off of speed as much and Bijan is considered speed on that right there. And so that's why we blitz him, and we do the things that we do on that play. They, it was a missed concept, and we were trying to take the air out of it, and he got hung up on the two receivers that came inside, which created space and air. And once Bijan got it, he got it with enough speed to the sideline that we couldn't run it down. So, but with him, we were trying to take air out of the coverage as much as possible, get to his body. So, you don't have that much space that you have to get away from, but the two routes that got inside picked him from that standpoint.”

On trying to make adjustments within the game:

“Well with within the game we talk about it because first at halftime it was addressed at halftime of, we just need to make sure that we're getting the looks that we want. But don't over try. Play hard, but don't over try, don't do anything outside of your assignment from that standpoint there. And then when we get into the meeting room and we talk about it we have what we call ‘Tell the Truth Monday’. And so, it goes, it works on a different level. So, I'll talk about some of the calls and why I called them in certain areas and then what, why did we make the mistakes? And I'll allow them to communicate to me, and I'll allow them to hear as coaches, alright, what we were exactly expecting and the and what we're exactly expecting moving forward. And so that's how we will rectify some of those issues.”

On communicating the importance of not overcomplicating situations when things aren’t going well:

“I, you know, you first thing, this is a, it's a fun game because it's hard, you know what I'm saying? And so, and we're in it because we like the challenge. And so, that's the one thing that we really talk, you don't have to over try, you don't necessarily panic in any situation when you get in situations then when you're not playing it exactly like you want to play it. Now what do you do? You go and you look at it, has the approach been the right approach? How, what can you do differently? How can you change the learning? When you're not getting the results that you want? We're not going to just necessarily keep on doing the same thing but we're going to look at every possible way of teaching the men, training the men, and then getting on the field and getting it, getting it done from that standpoint. But in this society and how things are now, and the guys, especially these guys that grew up in different than when we grew up, where they're in the social media and they read everything that everybody writes. It weighs on them, when you're my age 47 or when you then grow up in that environment, I don't look, so whatever people are saying about me, that's cool. I don't, I don't care because I don't see it, but they really look at it and it weighs on them. And so, then they start to try to over try. So that's one thing Q [Head Coach Dan Quinn] and I have talked about, how do we, not just the defense, but these young men in general, how do you keep them grounded from the standpoint of blocking out the noise because good or bad is not real, you know? And so, and its people that, that don't know the individuals or what's going on in, in some spot in spots. And so, that's what we have to do is block out the noise and go play. Well, I've told players before, if you want people to say positive things play positive. If I want to have people say positive things about me, I need to put a positive product out on the field. So, hopefully that answers your

question from that standpoint.”

On why players are being overaggressive in certain situations:

“I know, I, I'm not going to speak for the players. I think guys want to make plays and guys are just trying to get the turnovers and trying to do this and that, where the turnovers are going to come. Okay? The way that we've played the run, because we played it as a unit, I'm happy with that. Okay. What I'm not happy with are the explosive passes, right? If we can clean up those explosive passes without, let's say, without getting turnovers, we, as we clean up the explosive passes, we're playing a solid brand of football. Okay? Now, if we clean up the, when we clean up the explosive passes and get the turnovers, now we're playing a dominant style. But right now, we're playing a sloppy style because it's stopping on first down, stopping and here goes an explosive all right. Which just is not good. And, and we have to clean it up and we will clean it up. I have full confidence in the staff and the players that it will get handled and it will get started this week.”