

**Coach Mike Tomlin
Press Conference
October 28, 2008**



Coach Mike Tomlin: Good afternoon. This is kind of a big day for us around here; kind of a big week coming back from Sunday's difficult loss to the Giants. As a football team we must turn the page because we are looking at a stiff challenge this week in the Washington Redskins. They are a 6-2 football team; they are a 6-2 team for legitimate reasons. I will talk about the Redskins here a little bit. At quarterback they have (Jason) Campbell, who is playing very good football. He is making great decisions, he is spreading the ball around, he is taking very good care of the football; he hasn't thrown an interception. When you have a quarterback who hasn't thrown an interception you have a great chance of being 6-2. At tailback they have Clinton Portis who has run for 944 yards and is really on top of his game physically and mentally. He is doing a nice job of running and reading the zone schemes. When you come up short in the gap, he exploits you. He is putting together big plays but aside from that he is very consistent; he is finishing off runs; driving his legs through runs. He is a premier runner in this game. Campbell's targets are many; Santana Moss is the lead dog in that category; he is a big-play guy. He is good after the catch. (Chris) Cooley, the tight end, is very gifted as a tight end. The way that they use him validates that. He catches screens, he is a third-down target and he is capable of stretching the field vertically. Antwaan Randle El is a very talented jack-of-all-trades kind of guy who they do a nice job using his talents and gifts. The veterans up front work well together highlighted by (Chris) Samuels at left tackle; we expect him to be back in the lineup this week. Defensively, they have a tough crew. They have experienced some tough injuries; Shawn Springs has missed some time; Jason Taylor has missed some time. They are very consistent in terms of how they play and how they pursue the football. Up front, Cornelius Griffin is a very good football player; a very stout player. The guys around him make a very formidable front four. Their linebackers are very good. London Fletcher, the man in the middle, is still a very capable sideline-to-sideline guy. Marcus Washington is a thumper; he is an emotional sparkplug for that unit; it appears that he is anyway. In the secondary, they have (LaRon) Landry back there and he is becoming a veteran football player, and a young guy that a lot of people don't know a whole lot about, in (Chris) Horton, a rookie out of UCLA. He makes them an exciting young safety tandem; this guy has been playing very good football for them. At corner, they have Fred Smoot and Carlos Rogers along with a solid cast. If you put Shawn Springs in that mix then there is no question that they have an elite unit. It is a good thing that we have an extra day this week because we are going to need it and we are going to take advantage of it. Quickly, going through some injuries and some things that accompany that; Greg Warren had successful knee surgery yesterday. He will be placed on IR. Today we worked out four very capable long snapper candidates; we will continue to take in information in regards to those guys and visit with those guys before making a decision about one of those men before the end of the work day. Ryan Clark had a right shoulder dislocation; he is doubtful at this point for the game. He is better than we expected him to be at this point. Keyaron Fox still has a question about his availability with a hamstring strain. Casey Hampton is day-to-day with a turf toe that he sustained in the game; he might miss Wednesday or so. Don't expect that to keep him out. Bryant McFadden is healing nicely with his arm. Ben (Roethlisberger) might be day-to-day here at the front part of the week. Marvel Smith is still day-to-day working with his back spasms; hopefully we will see where he is on Wednesday; and if not then definitely on Thursday. Deshea (Townsend) should be fine; he is continuing to progress and really last week was his best week in terms of practice. That matter should be behind us. Willie (Parker) I just watched work out; he had a very good workout today. We will take it day-to-day and see how he feels in the morning and see if he is capable of practicing tomorrow after today's workout. All-in-all the list is getting some clarity; we will continue to make the adjustments necessary to allow us to put a winning-caliber unit out there on the field, and that is what we intend to do.

**Coach Mike Tomlin
Press Conference
October 28, 2008**



What is your plan with Santonio (Holmes) and have you heard anything from the league on his status?

This is where we are with Santonio's situation; Santonio came in and visited with me yesterday morning. It was a very productive meeting from my standpoint. As a football team and as an organization, in terms of our view of the situation, we have laid it to bed. Satisfactory action has been taken from our standpoint. We had a team meeting yesterday and he addressed his peers about the issue. He released a statement that expressed his feelings about the issue. For us, we are moving forward. All in all the whole way we approached this thing was to minimize the distractions for our football team. I thought that we did that. We came in and dealt with it yesterday and put it behind us. We have a big time preparation day today for the Redskins. Tomorrow we move forward as a team and he will be included with that. In terms of what action the league will take it really depends on the outcome of the criminal case. We'll let that process run its course. From our standpoint, we dealt with it sufficiently. We are ready to move forward and address the Redskins. That kind of outlines the steps we took, he took and we'll move forward.

Was he fined?

Again, I will leave that between him and I. That will be in-house business; again with the emphasis on making it as less of a distraction as we can.

How imperative is it to minimize distractions?

That is always going to be our goal in situations. That is just the story of the National Football League. Distractions come with being a good team so we don't run away from it. We hope that there are some distractions; we hope that there is interest in terms of how we are playing and what is going on here. Our ability to deal with it will ultimately determine our level of success. We don't shy away from that; it is part of the football business. We embrace it; we have to deal with it and deal with it well.

Have you heard from the Players Association regarding Holmes being inactive?

I did not and really I am not concerned with their view on whether or not I chose to activate him. We have 53 men on the team and we activate 45 for a particular game; that is what we chose to do and we move forward.

Has your confidence in Nate Washington increased?

It really hasn't gone up; it has been pretty good. Nate has been really consistent; not only over the past couple of weeks but for us since training camp. It probably didn't manifest itself in terms of statistics early on but he has been a very consistent practice player and very focused. He has done a nice job and we are not surprised by what he is doing.

What is Ben Roethlisberger's injury and how is Mitch Berger?

It is the same thing, his right shoulder. That is going to continue to be week-to-week. It was better last week because he rarely got hit versus the Bengals. He got a few times on Sunday so we will see how he feels when he comes in here on Wednesday. In terms of the punter, he had a hamstring strain; we will see where he is when he comes in tomorrow. He was in yesterday and again today getting treatment. We feel like he is going to be ok but again we will see how he responds to the work that the practice week gives him.

**Coach Mike Tomlin
Press Conference
October 28, 2008**



What has been the problem with the return game?

Really, more than anything, we haven't cracked the big one. That is what averages are all about; there isn't much difference between an average return team and a poor return team. The average teams pop the big one and we have yet to do that. We have had some 10 and 12-yard returns in our punt return game but we haven't had the 50 or 60-yarder that makes your average immediately respectable. It is the same thing in the kickoff return game; we have been consistent at about 20-21 yard a return and we have been consistent at getting the ball up around the 30 (yard-line) but we haven't popped the big one. Nothing is wrong with what we are doing schematically or how the guys are executing. We have to continue to look for the detail in regards to that. The cast of characters has changed a little bit due to circumstances; so be it. I think that we can continue to get comfortable with the men that are returning and continue to work with our schemes and then we will get what we are looking for in that regard and they will deliver a field-possession play or a big-splash play in that area.

Is Najeh Davenport capable of delivering a big return?

He is our only option at this point due to the circumstances. He is doing a very solid job for us. He is playing to his strengths; what he does is catch the ball and get vertical; he is good at creating yards after contact. He is not going to get out of his personality and I appreciate that element and what he brings to the table. At this point, he is the best that we have, and I appreciate his efforts.

Talk about Jason Campbell:

He is a very talented guy physically; he can escape the pressure; he has an extremely strong arm and he is a smart guy. I have been exposed to him; I was on the Senior Bowl coaching staff that coached him when he came out. He was a very mature young man in terms of how he handled himself at that time. He is the son of a coach so he keeps football in good perspective; he is an even-keel kind of guy. He is comfortable in his shoes and he is getting better with experience. He is making great decisions, moving the offense, and his team is winning.

Does Tyrone Carter start is Ryan Clark can't?

At this point yes. Tyrone Carter is the leading candidate but Anthony Smith is capable. We are going to watch this week and let those guys work this week. We will make that decision later in the week.

If Marvell Smith is healthy, will he start?

Yes, if he is given the green light then he will start for us at left tackle.

Do you expect to have Aaron Smith this week?

At this point (yes). We will play it by ear. He has some personal issues that he is attending to that require his attention. We respect that and we respect him. We are very much in full support of him and what he is going through. When he is here, he is here.

Would you like to see Roethlisberger throw the ball away more?

When he holds onto the ball and we beat people like we did in Jacksonville, then we sit in press conferences like this and we praise him. When we lose like we did the other night, then we question him. He is a competitor, he is a great player, and he is our quarterback; we will ride into stadiums and play with him.

**Coach Mike Tomlin
Press Conference
October 28, 2008**



What do you appreciate about what Jim Zorn has done with Washington?

I tip my hat off to him. Coaching is a fraternity and I am one of the ones that likes to root for people unless we are playing them. He is doing well and they have a very good football team. They appear to be very focused; they dropped their opener to the defending champions, the Giants, and they have been on a roll ever since then. They had a letdown versus St. Louis, but that is football. They are playing very well, they are playing together, and they are finding ways to win games. That is what it is all about. They are 62 at the turn for them; that is a pretty good position to be in, and one that we hope to be in after this weekend.

Do they remind you of anybody defensively?

They have their personality. I think that Coach (Greg) Blache is a veteran defensive coach and coordinator. He was with Chicago several years ago when I broke into the league and I was with Tampa Bay; we played those guys twice a year. One thing you know about those guys is that they will take on his personality. They are going to be fundamentally sound, they are going to attack you and they are going to run to the football; that is what they are going to be doing. They play behind some ring-leaders and emotional spark plugs; guys like Marcus Washington, London Fletcher and Cornelius Griffin and Landry; they are a good unit. They have been able to play, and play at a high level, through injury. I think that is an indication of what they are capable of being.

What is wrong with Mitch Berger?

I can't speak to the wincing, but he has been nursing a hamstring sprain.

Is it his plant leg?

Yes.

Did you work at camp with a backup snapper?

We have and we do. Since I have been here really, James Harrison and James Farrior have been the backup candidates. James Harrison snaps at least once a week, every week, since I have been here. Now in practice and at training camp is one thing. Inside stadiums in the fourth quarter of football games versus the defending World Champions is another thing. I appreciate him. The comments that I said about his efforts after the game were sincere. He does a lot for this football team. If I had to do it all over again, I would do it the same way. I'd hope for a different outcome, but I'd do it again.

Will your new snapper handle all snaps, or will Stapleton handle some?

Ideally, we would like for him to handle them all. That is where we are headed right now. Of course, Darnell (Stapleton) is a guy that is short-snap capable.

**Coach Mike Tomlin
Press Conference
October 28, 2008**



What makes it difficult for a center to long-snap a ball?

This is a legitimate question. The center in shotgun, snaps with one hand. When you are a long snapper in the punt situation, you are a two-handed snapper. Velocity is very important. Operation time. Snap to kick defines you. Velocity and accuracy are less important from a center standpoint because you cut down on distance. It really is a significant difference. Anybody is virtually capable of delivering a shotgun snap. I can stick a tackle, put him at center, and he has a better chance of executing a shotgun snap than he does executing a regular center to quarterback exchange. The distance is so short, and the degree of accuracy that is required is not very high. When you are talking about snapping a punt and from a protection standpoint, velocity is important. Accuracy is important. Total time operation is important. It is something that is very different in terms of expectations. It is not realistic at all to expect a center to be capable of snapping a punt. Now if he is a center that has also worked as a punt snapper, that's another thing. But just because someone is a capable center, capable of snapping in the shotgun, does not make them an automatic candidate for punt snapping.

Is a center more instinctively capable than a linebacker?

Absolutely not. Two totally different skill sets.

How did substitutes do for Ryan Clark last year?

I guess my answer to that is hindsight and that is always 20/20. We value what Ryan is to our football team. He has been playing at high level. He is a great communicator. He is a leader among leaders that are out there. We didn't respond to it well in the long haul, because we didn't play as good as we played when we had him in there. That is the reality of it. Will that unfold the same way this year? We don't intend it to. We are going to work toward playing at a high level. Again, the injury that he is dealing with right now is a little different than what he dealt with a year ago. I think that a year ago we were more concerned about his health than the short term misery of dealing with an injury. Hopefully it is a week and then we move forward. In the meanwhile, guys will be required to step up and deliver a winning performance for us. One in which I know they are capable of delivering.

What is the backup plan is Berger can't go?

We worked out a young man again today that we worked out several weeks back. We will see what develops with him. We have a level of comfort with what he is potentially capable of giving us. We have a plan in place should Mitch Berger be unavailable.

Who would hold?

Charlie Batch is a backup holder. When he went down, Hines Ward has done it every week, twice a week since Charlie Batch has been down. So if we get in a situation where we are looking at a new punter, and that is a big if, but if we are, who we replace him with will be a candidate, but also Hines Ward has a little comfort and continuity with Jeff Reed because he has done it every week since Charlie Batch went down.

Are you less likely to make a move with Mitch Berger because he holds?

There is some thought along those lines, but more than anything, we are going to put healthy people on the field. We'll listen to the advice of the experts in regards to his health. If he is healthy enough to play, he will play. If he is not, we have a decision to make. We will make the appropriate decision.

**Coach Mike Tomlin
Press Conference
October 28, 2008**



Does Jeff Reed punt at all?

He is the emergency punter. We are talking a lot about emergency contingency players. So if I go down, John Mitchell. Jeff Reed is the emergency punter.

Have you ever dealt with this before?

Every day I walk through these doors, I expect the unexpected. It is one of the exciting things about this job at this level in this league. If you don't like it, you have a problem. I embrace it and I love it. We have to be alive this week. We have Monday Night Football in the Nation's capitol. All eyes on the Nation's capitol this week and probably not because we are playing the Redskins, but it is exciting for us nonetheless. The things that go with it, dealing with situations and making adjustments and keeping the team focused, all of those things drive us and we are excited about it.

How did Santonio Holmes handle speaking to his teammates?

I would like to leave those matters in-house because I think that minimizes the distraction. He released a statement in regards to his feelings about what happened. I would like to thank you guys in advance for cooperating with this statement and letting it lay to bed and move forward on Wednesday.

Does he return to starting lineup?

Yes he does.

Any ramifications with historical suggestion of Redskins game day week of election?

I could care less.